
President Wilson's Surveillance State

IN JULY 1971 the *New York Times* published a curious story, buried inside on page five, about “a private dossier on alleged Communists . . . kept for 23 years by a retired army colonel and his wife.” Recently, the story continued, the Pentagon had sent this dossier to the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, famed for its witch-hunting pursuit of American communists.¹ The army had investigated before it shipped the papers to the Senate, finding that this was not just a dossier but a massive private archive with thousands of classified documents compiled by a long-forgotten army general, Ralph Van Deman, dead now for nearly twenty years. After reviewing files full of classified reports from the army, navy, and FBI, this military investigator had remarked that “the extent, detail and quality of the information obtained by Van Deman” was “remarkable.” But he warned that “the question of the Army’s relationship to Van Deman could also prove embarrassing.”²

In this era of anti-Vietnam protests when concern over civil liberties was strong, the *New York Times* followed up with an investigative report, finding that “not much is known about General Van Deman himself.” After some service as an army surgeon, he “went into intelligence in the Philippines” and later became “head of military intelligence in Washington from May 1917, to June 1918.” During his year in command, said the *Times*, “he was instrumental in organizing volunteer civilian sleuths, such as the American Protective League [APL], that kept watch for signs of disloyalty.” After retiring to California in 1929, he spent the next quarter century amassing what the *Times* called “a secret collection of reports on 125,000 allegedly subversive persons.”³ In a later editorial the *Times* damned these files as a repository of “anti-labor, anti-Semitic, and anti-civil rights bias” and demanded that they be “destroyed.”⁴

But the general’s ghost could not be exorcised by burning a few bundles of paper. For Van Deman’s influence was embedded deep inside the institutional architecture of the U.S. internal security apparatus that he was instrumental in

building during World War I. Now, in the midst of another war with rampant domestic surveillance, the Congress, press, and public had finally seen the shadow, though not yet the substance, of this long-dead general's ambiguous legacy for American society.

During the social ferment that surrounded World War I, a mix of emergency legislation and extralegal enforcement removed the restraints of courts and Constitution that had protected Americans from surveillance and secret police for over a century. With the fear of spies and subversion everywhere, police methods that had been tested and perfected in the colonial Philippines migrated homeward to provide both precedents and personnel for the establishment of a U.S. internal security apparatus. Transformed by colonial warfare from a conventional army careerist into "the father of U.S. military intelligence," Van Deman applied his experience of empire to establish the army's Military Intelligence Division (MID) in 1917 as a comprehensive espionage and counterespionage agency.⁵ After years of pacifying an overseas empire where race was the frame for perception and action, colonial veterans came home to turn the same lens on America, seeing its ethnic communities not as fellow citizens but as internal colonies requiring coercive controls. Within twelve months of introducing stringent security measures, President Wilson's wartime America circa 1918 came to bear a marked resemblance to Governor Taft's colonial Philippines circa 1901. Both had similar arrays of legislation that limited civil liberties and secret services that engaged in arbitrary arrests, rigid censorship, mass surveillance, covert penetration, and black operations. Although it was established as a seemingly transitory wartime measure, this domestic security apparatus would persist for the next half century as a defining feature of American political life.

In the years surrounding World War I, the social strain of military mobilization and demobilization produced an eruption of class and racial conflicts that made this period one of the most volatile and violent in U.S. history, leaving a lasting imprint on the character of the American state. In a coincidence that transformed these local conflicts into a larger social confrontation, this radical ferment came at a time when Washington was adopting powerful instruments, many of them forged at the periphery of empire, for actively shaping American society: immigration controls, intelligence testing, drug prohibition, mandatory public health measures, and internal security. At the war's outset, moreover, the contradiction between the country's far-flung global empire and its poor military preparedness produced a sense of urgency in Washington that soon reverberated across the country as hysteria and xenophobia. Indeed, the United States was going to war with Germany at a time when its largest ethnic group, German Americans, was only partially assimilated and harbored deep cultural and linguistic loyalties to the old country that was now considered a security threat. Just four years before the war a full 10 percent of the U.S. population had claimed German as their *first* language.⁶ In the midst of the mobilization for war,

Washington coped with these myriad contradictions by establishing a powerful intelligence service.

In building a U.S. intelligence capacity, empire's stamp on the nascent national security apparatus was both broad and deep, from data management to larger design. In both colonial Manila and wartime Washington, counterintelligence was characterized by similarities large and small. The reduction of voluminous amounts of information to a single card for every subject. Recruitment of civilian auxiliaries whose identities were concealed by numbered codes. Covert operational procedures for surveillance and infiltration. An ethnic or racial template for the perception of threat. Mass relocation of suspect populations. The systematic use of scandal as political disinformation. And, above all, a sense of omnipotence over peoples deemed alien and therefore lesser. Just as the Philippines Constabulary had destroyed reputations through revelations of sexual or financial irregularities in occupied Manila, so the U.S. internal security apparatus would attack suspected subversives not by formal prosecution but by a similar social ostracism exercised through public listing or "blacklisting." Not only did Van Deman's civilian apparatus later identify Hollywood communists for blacklisting during the 1940s, but some sources argue his network also played a key role in the political rise of Richard Nixon, providing his early congressional campaigns with confidential intelligence to red-bait liberal opponents.

In this process of imperial mimesis, a state such as the United States that creates a colony with circumscribed civil liberties and pervasive policing soon shows many of those same coercive features in its own society. As the metropole's internal security apparatus starts to resemble the imperial, so its domestic politics begin to exhibit many attributes of the colonial.

Although American intelligence officers serving overseas practiced a clandestine tradecraft similar to that of their European allies, U.S. domestic security emerged from the world war as a distinctive public-private or state-society collaboration. Just as the Philippines Constabulary relied on hundreds of Filipino operatives, so the wartime Military Intelligence Division amplified its reach through the three hundred thousand citizen spies of the American Protective League. Established in 1917–18, this alliance of state security and civilian adjuncts continued, under different names, for the next fifty years as a sub rosa matrix that honeycombed American society with active informers, secretive civilian organizations, and government security agencies, federal and local. In each succeeding global crisis, this covert nexus expanded its domestic operations, producing new contraventions of civil liberties, from the systemic surveillance of German Americans during World War I through the secret blacklisting of suspected communists during the cold war. Police worldwide had long relied on low-life informers known by derogatory terms such as "snitch" or "phizz gig." Secret services in Europe and Japan had paid individual spies, informers, and agent provocateurs for the better part of a century. But U.S. internal security was now

developing a unique profile as an institutional fusion of federal agencies and civilian organizations, investing this distinctive nexus with both the social force of a mass movement and the institutional resilience of a state agency—attributes that would define its operations for the next half century.

This clandestine apparatus and its anonymous apparatchiks provide an invisible thread of continuity that ties together the draconian security of World War I, the postwar repression of militant labor, Japanese American internment during World War II, and the anticommunist hysteria of the 1950s. Although American historians have often treated each episode as specific to a short-lived period, throughout this entire half century the same state-civil nexus emerged to shape events, sometimes by empowering civilian adjuncts, sometimes by enfolded these networks into an expanded system of state security.⁷ Not only did U.S. colonial policing foster formidable security services within the Philippine polity, but it also played a seminal role in the formation of the U.S. national security apparatus, lending a larger significance to this fragment of America's history.

Wartime Security Services

World War I transformed the U.S. state through the mobilization of a four-million-man army, massive industrial procurements, and the creation of an Argus-eyed internal security apparatus. After a century without any significant federal policing, wartime Washington quickly built an interlocking counterintelligence complex armed with expansive legal powers. During just nineteen months of war, the fledgling Bureau of Investigation (BI, later the FBI) grew from three hundred “amateurish” employees with “no counterintelligence experience” into a “major investigative agency” of fifteen hundred. The Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) expanded from “a tiny, insignificant organization” into an aggressive agency with three hundred officers. The army's Military Intelligence Division swelled from just one officer—the imperial veteran Van Deman—to seventeen hundred employees backed by 350,000 badge-carrying civilian agents.⁸ Among all these agencies, the MID, with its comprehensive doctrines and global reach, would prove the most seminal in the formation of a U.S. national security state. By 1918 it had grown “to surpass the size and efficiency of ONI,” once the nation's leading intelligence agency.⁹ Through the sum of these experiences, Washington emerged from the war with a covert capacity incorporated in its military bureaucracy.

In prewar decades the federal government had limited intelligence, less operational capacity, and no covert capability. Indeed, before the founding of the Bureau of Investigation in 1908 Washington had no domestic security agency worthy of the name, leaving policing to the cities and surveillance to private agencies such as the Pinkertons. A decade later, on the eve of world war, the bureau was still what one sympathetic chronicler called “a small and inept force

of 219 agents.”¹⁰ During the Philippine-American War of 1898–1902, the army had formed its first field intelligence unit, the Division of Military Information, whose commander, Van Deman, created a comprehensive intelligence capacity that proved sweeping in its data collection and deft in its application. To crush the revolutionary underground concealed within Filipino society, he compiled intelligence on the entire native elite, reduced all data to a single, synoptic “descriptive card” for each subject, and disseminated timely tactical intelligence to combat units via telegraph. After armed conflict gave way to long-term pacification, these operations became a massive counterintelligence effort against both Filipino subversives and Japanese imperial spies.

Instead of building on this Philippine experience, the War Department initially moved in the opposite direction, first downgrading and later closing its intelligence service. Operating from Manila in the aftermath of the Philippine War, Van Deman led a secretive, six-month mapping mission to China in 1906, shadowed by Japanese spies and learning firsthand the global game of espionage. A year later, back in Washington as head of the Map Section inside the small Military Information Division (MID), Van Deman presided over a similar effort in Latin America that sent a young Lt. Joseph Stillwell on a reconnaissance to Guatemala. In 1908, however, the army abolished MID, causing what Van Deman called “an immediate cessation of all military information work” in the United States. Although military intelligence disappeared from Washington, Van Deman used the Philippine unit, the army’s only surviving intelligence operation, for another mapping mission to China in 1911, again trailed by Japanese spies.¹¹

Returning to Washington in 1915, Major Van Deman was assigned to the War College where he found himself “the only officer . . . who had had any training or experience in what we now designate as military intelligence.”¹² Determined to correct this oversight, Van Deman forged an alliance with the War College chief, Gen. Joseph E. Kuhn, and the two worked tirelessly in the year before America entered the world war, “making an extensive study of military intelligence reports from abroad” and winning a million-dollar War Department appropriation for “Contingencies—Military Information Section, General Staff.” After the declaration of war in April 1917, however, the army’s chief of staff, Hugh Scott, proved ignorant, like many officers of his generation, “about the vital importance of an intelligence service” and gave Van Deman “strict orders” to abandon his efforts. Through discrete maneuvers, the major brought his detailed plans directly to Secretary of War Newton Baker, who on May 11 ordered the formation of a Military Intelligence Section under Van Deman’s command. Drawing on his Philippine experience and a borrowed British organizational chart, within weeks Van Deman had established a complete design for the first U.S. internal security agency. Based on his years of colonial espionage, the major framed a template that divided intelligence work into two basic operations, espionage and counter-espionage. In a bold, defining feature of his plan, this new military unit would

coordinate Washington's diffuse intelligence effort, centralizing information from all federal agencies, much as he had once done in Manila, and serving as the sole contact with foreign secret services. For his first recruit the major selected Capt. Alexander B. Coxe, a veteran of the Philippine campaign and his former MID comrade during a "confidential mission to China." With Coxe now serving as MID's all-powerful secretary, this core of two recruited a cadre of six regular officers and a larger pool of talented civilians with specialized linguistic and analytical skills. When a lowly State Department code clerk named Herbert O. Yardley dropped by to suggest the need to monitor enemy communications, the major commissioned him a first lieutenant with command of his Codes and Ciphers Unit. "Van Deman's heavily lined faced reminded me of Lincoln's," said Yardley of their first meeting. "He appeared old and terribly tired, but when he turned his deep eyes toward me I sensed his power."¹³

While Van Deman developed counterintelligence for domestic security, another Philippine veteran, Col. Dennis E. Nolan, created a parallel field intelligence capacity inside the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) fighting on the western front in France. For four years before the war, 1907 to 1911, Nolan had been detailed to the Philippines Constabulary, first as its inspector and later as director for the tempestuous Southern Luzon district, positions that immersed him in colonial policing and its intelligence operations. In selecting officers for the European campaign, the AEF commander John Pershing, who had spent much of his prewar career pacifying the southern Philippines, favored fellow colonial veterans for key commands, particularly in areas of innovation such as intelligence, logistics, and policing. In the first months of war, Pershing's chief of staff, Maj. James Harbord, who knew Nolan from their shared service in the Philippines Constabulary, summoned him for an after-dark meeting at the AEF's Washington headquarters, announcing that he had been selected "to head the Intelligence Section of the General Staff."¹⁴ After Pershing's staff crossed the Atlantic in June 1917 aboard the SS *Baltic*, Major Nolan plunged into the task of mastering combat intelligence, "a line of work in which Americans were less experienced than in any other war activity." After observing French and British procedures, Nolan drew up regulations for a comprehensive service that would collect combat intelligence about the enemy, disseminate topographic information, and engage in counterintelligence through the Corps of Intelligence Police, a new unit organized by Van Deman in Washington that later became the U.S. Counter Intelligence Corps. Under Nolan's plan, approved by General Pershing, intelligence and security units, all identified by the staffing denomination "2," were integrated into every echelon, from a battalion S-2 with twenty-eight men to a G-2 at divisional headquarters and the Intelligence Section at general headquarters with eleven officers and 332 soldiers.¹⁵

In the parallel area of military policing, Gen. Harry Bandholtz became the AEF's provost marshal general and was deemed by headquarters "specially fitted for the duty, having long been Chief of the Philippines Constabulary."¹⁶ At the

close of the war, General Harbord would also select Bandholtz, his former superior in the Philippines Constabulary, to form a new army security service, the Military Police, or MPs, charged with managing the chaos of occupation and demobilization. Drawing on what he called his “long experience in command of the Philippine Constabulary,” Bandholtz quickly built the MPs, following their formation in October 1918, into a corps of 31,627 men stationed in 476 cities and towns across five nations—France, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg, and the German Rhineland. To overcome a haphazard selection, Bandholtz established a specialist service school at Autun, France, that trained over four thousand officers and men in the last months of war. A surprisingly large number of former constabulary officers played formative roles in training this new service, ending early complaints of indifference, disrespect, or even “brutality” and establishing a record of respect for military regulations and “kindness . . . to the native inhabitants.” Veteran PC colonel John R. White commanded the MP training school in France with a rank of lieutenant colonel and was later promoted to deputy provost marshal of the AEF.¹⁷ The former chief of Manila’s secret service, John W. Green, served as a captain in the Twentieth Division under Col. Louis P. Van Schaick, a former officer in the Philippine Scouts, also training these MPs for their European duty.¹⁸

With all of the combat intelligence work done on the front lines in France, Van Deman’s Washington headquarters concentrated on counterintelligence, a mission quite similar to his earlier Philippine efforts.¹⁹ At the microlevel of data management, his earlier “descriptive card of inhabitants,” which reduced all the data about each Filipino subject to a single sheet, was replicated in MID’s similarly compact “suspect list” for domestic subversives. By the war’s end this list, Van Deman said, “consisted of many hundreds of thousands of cards.”²⁰ Using an imperial lens for perception of threat, MID refracted the American people through a prism of difference, seeing certain ethnic communities almost as domestic colonies. In Van Deman’s view Irish Americans, German Americans, “Hindus,” and “Negroes” were all dangerously susceptible to enemy propaganda and required constant surveillance. As one U.S. historian put it, Van Deman seemed to be driven by “the fear that the people of the United States could not be trusted and therefore should be controlled.”²¹ Most important, Van Deman adapted the colonial constabulary’s reliance on native agents for surveillance of these ethnic Americans.

As Major Van Deman was building his repressive machinery, the legislative and executive branches were collaborating to create an overarching legal framework for its activation. In the declaration of war against Germany on April 6, Congress had already authorized telephone and telegraph censorship, and just three weeks later the president issued an executive order assuming this authority. In quick succession Congress expanded these controls with passage of the Espionage Act in June, allowing the arrest of anyone who interfered with the war effort; the Trading with the Enemy Act in October, permitting the president to censor

subversive literature and monitor the mail; and the expansive Sedition Act in May 1918, stiffening penalties for dissent. These laws allowed the president to censor the mails, suppress print media, monitor suspected subversives, and prosecute dissidents, whether antiwar activists such as the socialist Eugene V. Debs or labor militants such as “Big Bill” Haywood.²²

Van Deman reached high to coordinate counterintelligence, besting a rival bid by the Treasury’s secret service and by early 1918 making his MID the “clearinghouse” for all information from the war, navy, and justice departments. Ambitious and visionary, he pushed hard within the army’s general staff to make MID a full division and win himself a star in the bargain. Yet he also overreached with an abortive attempt to supersede the Bureau of Investigation and centralize all counterintelligence under his command. Hostile toward Van Deman because of his incessant intrigues, the army chief of staff cut short his command after only a year and sent him off to Europe in June 1918 on a vague, make-work study mission, delaying his promotion to general for another decade.²³ Only weeks after his departure, an army reorganization elevated military intelligence to one of four “separate and coordinate” divisions of the general staff, winning a star for Van Deman’s successor.²⁴

After six months on this career-stopping study mission, Van Deman’s appointment to replace Nolan as head of AEF intelligence was preempted by the armistice, and instead he became chief of Allied counterintelligence at the Paris peace talks. In this modest capacity he remained overseas for another ten months, coordinating a network of spies that monitored the postwar tumult in Central Europe, providing security for the U.S. delegation at Versailles, and developing “an abiding distrust of Bolshevism.”²⁵ As he wrapped up the affairs of the AEF intelligence division in June 1919, Van Deman was characteristically concerned about the fate of his trademark suspect cards, which were rich in unique data about “undesirables.” He urged the retention of these records by the Paris military attaché but lost out to Nolan, who favored their transfer to MID in Washington.²⁶

American Protective League

From the first weeks of the war in April 1917, Washington focused its security agencies on controlling what MID called “the manifold domestic problems arising from . . . our mixed population,” specifically the large German American community, elements of which had been vocal in their support of the kaiser right up to the eve of America’s entry into the war. The threat of German American disloyalty and German imperial espionage created, in the view of Van Deman and colleagues at the Justice Department, an urgent need for vigilance against spies and subversion. Even though an extensive wartime study found that German intelligence did not have a significant spy network in the United States, Van Deman somehow concluded that the Germans must be using itinerant traveling

agents, making the threat omnipresent.²⁷ Of equal concern, mass hysteria over the possibility of subversion inspired vigilantes across America. When the Justice Department urged citizens to “report disloyal acts,” the number of complaints soon reached fifteen hundred a day, mostly, said the attorney general, from “hysterical women and . . . men, some doubtless actuated by malice and ill will, and the vast majority utterly worthless.”²⁸ Patriots also formed “dozens of organizations . . . devoted to running down of spies,” something Major Van Deman called “an extremely dangerous development.” Yet, with MID requiring millions of man hours for its burgeoning domestic security operations, he also saw potential in these groups, feeling that a national organization of civilian spies “might be of great value to the government.”²⁹

The most promising of these groups, the American Protective League, had been formed in the first weeks of war when a Chicago businessman, Albert M. Briggs, convinced the Bureau of Investigation's regional supervisor to collaborate with a citizen surveillance network. For the first nine months of the war, the APL's executive operated out of Chicago under a so-called War Board with representatives from nine agencies including the Bureau of Investigation and MID—the latter represented by Maj. Thomas B. Crockett, the APL's assistant chief, now commissioned into the army.³⁰ After conducting “a very careful investigation” of this and other civilian organizations, Major Van Deman summoned the APL's leader to offer him both a commission and a mission on the assurance that his members would be willing “to do absolutely nothing except what they were requested to do by the Military Intelligence Branch.” Through what the army's chief of staff described as an “arrangement with the Justice Department,” the APL was now placed “at the disposal of M.I.D.” After moving its headquarters to Washington in November, the APL reformed its executive to include just two government representatives, a lieutenant and captain from MID assigned to monitor the league's counterintelligence mission. Working closely with BI director Bruce Bielaski, Van Deman presided over the APL's transformation into a civilian counterintelligence auxiliary. It deployed over 350,000 volunteer agents in 1,400 local units who, working like constabulary spies in colonial Manila, amassed over a million pages of surveillance reports on German Americans. In just fourteen months, the league would conduct a total of three million wartime investigations for the government, including 440,000 cases of suspected subversion for MID.³¹

In their joint counterintelligence effort, the Justice Department was more mindful of civil liberties while MID sanctioned illegal methods in its unremitting pursuit of results. Government agencies would sometimes check the APL when it encroached on their jurisdictions, but the league's broad mandate allowed ample opportunity for what the U.S. Senate later called “zealous antics . . . trampling personnel sanctities, privacy, and civil liberties.” Most fundamentally, by investing the APL with semiofficial status and formal missions, both War and Justice legitimated the league's role, giving it a broad compass within this new covert

realm. In his annual report to Congress for 1917, Attorney General Thomas W. Gregory described the league as “a most important auxiliary and reserve force for the Bureau of Investigation.”³² At the White House President Wilson was wary of building a permanent security bureaucracy—“the danger of creating too much machinery”—and supported a civilian auxiliary force. He encouraged corporations to lend employees for the league’s work but drew the line at providing any White House endorsement of its fund-raising efforts.³³ In the first months of the war, Treasury Secretary William McAdoo, determined to protect his Secret Service, denounced the APL as irresponsible and inefficient, but the president sided with the attorney general and the league survived.³⁴

In a war in which ethnicity was the touchstone of loyalty, the APL quickly took shape as a xenophobe’s ideal: all male, all white, predominately Protestant, with deep anti-German antipathies and strong undertones of anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic biases. After its national headquarters was moved to Washington, DC, in November 1917, its leaders lived and worked together around the clock inside a genteel townhouse for the next fourteen months, lodge brothers on a secret mission to save America.³⁵ When the New York City branch tried to enlist a female member in March 1918, the Washington rectory replied sternly that it was “strongly against enrolling women.”³⁶ When Jerome Regensburg, a manufacturer with three thousand employees in his Tampa cigar factory, applied for membership in that city’s APL, his application was frozen because he was “of the Jewish faith.”³⁷ Similarly, an effective leader of the League’s New York City chapter was forced out amid a drumbeat of invective over his German ancestry.³⁸ As a consequence of its hostility to Irish Catholics, the APL found itself a full year into the war without a Massachusetts chapter, even though its leadership considered the “situation in Boston . . . very serious.”³⁹

To build a rank and file with real operational capacity, the APL relied heavily on street savvy individuals with access to information, often private eyes of dubious reputation. When the William J. Burns Detective Agency of Los Angeles wrote MID about “running into considerable information of interest,” Van Deman was keen to receive “whatever information your good patriotism would prompt you in sending.”⁴⁰ Such an eclectic appetite for intelligence produced seamy alliances with local gumshoes such as “Captain” Foster of Buffalo, described by a War Department official who knew him well as “a shyster of the first water.”⁴¹ The APL headquarters itself complained about “a perfect deluge of people in here every day who think that they are born sleuths . . . , whereas . . . they are all about 100% rotten.”⁴²

The APL recruited its local leaders through elite networks, usually favoring bankers or corporate officers. In August 1917 a Brooklyn resident’s uncorroborated endorsement of his brother-in-law, the treasurer of the Portsmouth Savings Bank who had reported “instances of pro-German attitude,” earned this captain of industry an invitation to head the APL’s New Hampshire chapter.⁴³ A

similar strategy employed by MID was exemplified that December when two coal mine fires raised suspicions of arson and prompted Van Deman to write the Pennsylvania State Police recommending a mine owner's son as the ideal man to form "an information organization."⁴⁴ Even in areas without labor problems, Van Deman frequently appointed corporate officers as his "confidential" agents.⁴⁵

Backed by MID, the league was intervening in social conflicts on the side of capital and opposing collective action by unions or socialists. This corporate bias became clear in August 1918 when the International Association of Machinists, the "aristocrats of organized labor," forwarded a complaint from its Milwaukee chapter that the local APL chief was threatening loyal unionists "with induction immediately into the military forces, if they show any dissatisfactions with conditions in the shop" and warning any aliens who tried to change jobs that "they would be interned." In response the attorney general informed the APL headquarters of its "suspicion that your Milwaukee office interferes . . . in the interests of the employer."⁴⁶

Despite complaints about the league's violation of civil liberties, the attorney general and his BI director invested the group with a semiofficial status, approving badges stamped with an expansive motto that read "Auxiliary to the U.S. Department of Justice."⁴⁷ The APL also won the ultimate federal perquisite when the U.S. Postal Service awarded league headquarters "the franking privilege" of free mail.⁴⁸

To a surprising degree, the APL took charge of most of the government's routine security operations. At the war's peak the APL's various security investigations represented 75 to 80 percent of the Justice Department's workload in midwestern areas such as Chicago or Cleveland and 50 percent in New York City.⁴⁹ Moving beyond mere paperwork, in January 1918 the attorney general asked that the APL assign one of its members to each of the 4,700 draft boards nationwide with the authority to arrest anyone who failed to appear.⁵⁰ With deserters numbering fifty thousand and draft evaders three hundred thousand by early 1918, thousands of APL agents in cities across America periodically pinned on their badges for "slacker raids," which targeted the many aliens and recent immigrants avoiding conscription.⁵¹ The Justice Department's authorization for the APL to "take" and "hold" suspected slackers until these individuals could prove their registration for the draft was clearly illegal, a presumption of guilt with the burden of proof upon the accused. Nonetheless, when a citizen who had been detained without probable cause during a raid in Lansing, Michigan, sued for five thousand dollars in damages, the Justice Department ordered the U.S. attorney to appear for the local APL's chief as if he were a government employee.⁵² With Justice endorsing extralegal operations, the APL's slacker raids soon degenerated into outright abuse and racketeering, particularly after April 1918 when the attorney general authorized bounties of fifty dollars for every arrest.⁵³

Yet both the Justice Department and its BI also adopted a certain circumspection toward the APL, resisting the organization's pressure for affirmation of its

official status. When the U.S. attorney at Nashville asked to make five APL members federal deputy marshals so they would be “clothed with some authority as a protection in their work,” the Justice Department refused, saying that past appointments had “led to complications.”⁵⁴

Throughout the war, the APL pressed hard for limitations on civil liberties. In April 1918, for example, the Saint Louis chapter urged passage of extreme amendments to the Espionage Act that would allow detention without habeas corpus and heavy penalties for “disloyal utterances.” A few days later when a mob of three hundred men lynched a suspected subversive in Collinsville, Illinois, the Saint Louis chapter fired off smug letters saying that the government’s failure to suppress “pro-German utterances” had prompted these communities to “take the law into their own hands.” This view was seconded by the town’s mayor, an APL member, and the local jury, which later found the mob’s leaders not guilty of murder.⁵⁵ Although its official letterhead read “Operating under the Direction of the United States Department of Justice,” the APL systematically denied due process through its first principle of never allowing the accused to confront the accuser.⁵⁶ Consequently, some Justice Department employees resisted Washington’s pressure to collaborate with the group, notably the U.S. attorney in Cleveland, who questioned the attorney general in January 1918 about the APL’s “proper function” and insisted that all official inquiries should be conducted by “some other branch of the government service.”⁵⁷ Indeed, after months of heavy-handed raids by the league and the police “red squad,” Cleveland’s Socialist Party complained to Washington that the “coarse language and rough tactics” were nothing less than a “Reign of Terrorism.” In stern letters to the APL, the Justice Department stated that these raids had entailed “a great deal of brutality” and represented an “unconstitutional infringement of the rights of public assemblage and free speech.”⁵⁸

Manhattan Misadventure

Among all the APL chapters, New York City’s was both the most promising and problematic, suggesting some of the pitfalls inherent in outsourcing state surveillance to a loosely regulated band of vigilantes. As the site of the country’s largest German American community and busiest port of embarkation for the European war, New York held an unequalled strategic significance.⁵⁹ During its sixteen months of operation, the APL’s amateurism was thrown into sharp relief by the city’s sophistication, producing a succession of misadventures that involved break-ins by uncontrolled strong-arm squads, false reports intended to cripple commercial rivals, and tens of thousands of illegal arrests.

Within the vast New York area and its myriad security challenges, there was no individual or agency concerned with correcting the APL’s endless problems. Its New York chapter had generally close relations with MID and Justice, but

these offices used the organization as an adjunct when needed and otherwise ignored it. In March 1918 APL leaders reported that there was “no one ranking officer in command of all the intelligence branches of the Army in New York.”⁶⁰ Selected by Van Deman as his chief agent for New York, Maj. Nicholas Biddle was a former deputy police commissioner who recruited twenty-three members of the city’s bomb squad, New York’s original antisubversion unit, diverting the main MID office and its 160 employees from war work into ordinary criminal investigations and antiradical repression.⁶¹ Complicating matters further, the league had cool relations with the Office of Naval Intelligence despite the navy’s multifaceted security concerns among the sixteen thousand employees at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. When ordered to offer their services to the navy in May 1918, the APL’s local leaders met two commanders at the navy yard who mockingly suggested that the league might be able to help with the “great many cases” they were currently giving to “the Boy Scouts.”⁶²

In its first months the league’s New York chapter had expanded too rapidly, attracting a range of irresponsible freelance agents. In these early days, an influential operative named George Lester, vice president of the Fleischmann Company in suburban Peekskill, had formed a “private free lance intelligence bureau” of “ex-policemen” who were “very apt to resort to strong-arm methods in investigating cases of very high-class people in New York, doing such little things as breaking in doors in people’s apartments.” When the city’s APL chief, E. H. Rushmore, tried to cleanse his ranks in mid-1918, headquarters in Washington counseled him to overlook the “objectionable members of Lester’s squad” and focus instead on retaining both Lester and his company president, Julius Fleischmann, “because of their rather powerful positions.”⁶³ In February 1918 the APL’s office in Washington authorized a Manhattan wheeler-dealer, Col. Fred Feigl, to open his own office at a Times Square hotel and lead squads totaling some two hundred men “on a small military basis.”⁶⁴

In the hands of these amateur gumshoes, even routine investigations could produce embarrassing incidents. The New York APL’s thousands of background checks of civilian employees bound for France met angry resistance from Red Cross nurses. In January 1918, Chief Rushmore complained to headquarters that the Red Cross personnel director, a Miss Draper, had allowed a rejected nurse applicant to see the accusations against her, prompting a reply from the APL directorate that this was “a very serious mistake on the part of the Red Cross.” As the APL continued to find Red Cross applicants unfit, the redoubtable Miss Draper and her New York colleagues offered “considerable criticism,” charging that one league investigator had “demanded \$100 from a Red Cross applicant.”⁶⁵

More sophisticated investigations were even less satisfactory. In May 1918 the APL got wind of a possible German spy when one Miss Mae Dougherty of 480 Central Park West phoned in a tip about a man she had been dating for six weeks. The suspect was “Francis Turno, 17 W. 58th Street . . . [who] looks like a German

but claims to be Polish, and says that he is in the service of the United States.” The APL assigned the case to Henri C. Harnickell, Esq., a Broadway lawyer, who marched into the Beaux Arts Café with a stock-broker sidekick, “both . . . very much intoxicated,” flashed their APL badges, and loudly denounced the suspect as “a dirty Hun.” They then prowled the Ritz-Carleton Hotel seeking to confirm the suspect’s story with the city’s ONI chief. Through this public spectacle, the navy complained, the APL’s “drunken members exposed one of the very valuable, covered operatives of the Naval Intelligence.” Harnickell responded that he had “worked very hard on this case for over a week and that it had many suspicious sides to it,” but he was now satisfied that the suspect’s “Government position clears up the matter entirely in his favor.”⁶⁶

Not only did the APL’s amateurism compromise real intelligence work, but its cloak of secrecy allowed league members to harass commercial rivals with baseless accusations. Assigned to investigate accusations of disloyalty against Frederick W. Sells of Diehl Manufacturing in Elisabethport, New Jersey, the APL’s New York office reported signs of subversion. Significantly, the League’s investigator, W. D. Lindsay, was also an executive at Western Electric, a direct competitor of the target firm. After an extensive, time-consuming investigation found the accusation to be palpably false, the BI’s Newark agent concluded that the only real crime was “the matter of Mr. Lindsay’s motives.” Consequently, APL Washington asked its New York office to determine whether Lindsay might be guilty of trying to “cripple a competitor.” After a cursory review of the case, New York insisted that Lindsay gave his information to the BI “entirely with a spirit of patriotism” and was “one of our best men” through whose efforts “two men in the Electrical Industry were interned last week.”⁶⁷

Although the APL could handle routine complaints about pro-German loyalties at, say, a Lenox Avenue bowling alley, its operatives and their MID handlers proved inept when confronted with a complex case of possible German espionage.⁶⁸ In November 1917 the president of the New York Electric Society lodged a vague charge with the APL’s Manhattan office that Dr. Karl Georg Frank was, “without doubt, active in the interests of Germany,” sparking a major investigation. As every government agent knew, Dr. Frank was the former manager of the Telefunken-Siemens transatlantic wireless station at Sayville, Long Island, which had been seized in 1915 on the president’s orders to prevent possible transmission of coded messages to German submarines cruising in the North Atlantic.⁶⁹ Ratcheting up the pressure in February 1918, MID “raided and smashed in” the Broadway offices of Frank’s longtime associate Richard Pfund. Without any real evidence, Van Deman wrote BI director Bielaski, asserting that Frank was dangerous enough for “revocation of his citizenship and subsequent internment.”⁷⁰ The War Department soon terminated these inconclusive inquiries, allowing Frank to emerge from the war as a founder of the patriotic Steuben Society of America in May 1919.⁷¹

After fourteen months of such fiascos, the New York APL outdid itself with a series of spectacular slacker raids in September 1918. For over a year the city had been a "slacker haven" where deserters and draft dodgers faced less chance of arrest than in any other major metropolitan area in America. With U.S. forces in France desperately short of manpower and pressures from Washington mounting, the city's BI superintendent and APL chief Rushmore launched the nation's largest raids. At 6:30 a.m. on September 3, APL agents led thousands of soldiers and sailors in blockading subway entrances across the city, demanding draft registration cards and detaining some twenty to forty thousand residents the first day alone. By day three criticism was rising. The local U.S. attorney asserted that the APL men were making thousands of arrests "without authority," prompting the *New York World* to denounce this "Amateur Prussianism in New York." Highlighting this amateurism, among the 60,187 suspects detained during the three-day sweep only 199 were in any way draft dodgers. A week later Attorney General Gregory, under pressure from the president and treasury secretary, released a report stating that "contrary to law, certain members of . . . this Department . . . used . . . members of the American Protective League . . . in making arrests." This public censure dealt a crippling blow to the league's New York division. With the APL now shorn of its aura as an official law enforcement agency, both private and public organizations stopped cooperating with its investigations. Members began to resign. Chief Rushmore demanded that the attorney general affirm the APL's status as an official "auxiliary." But Gregory responded, as did BI Director Bielaski, with stern orders that the league could not arrest or "hold" anyone. In the end Rushmore told the Justice Department that his men would accept no further assignments. Although the APL mounted slacker raids elsewhere in America during the two months before the armistice, the war was over for the league's New York division.⁷²

These controversies doomed the league to extinction. Its leadership wanted to continue their surveillance efforts in peacetime, but Attorney General Gregory, aware of the potential for abuse from thousands of agents holding secret, sensitive information about their fellow citizens, was determined that the organization would disappear. At the end of 1918, one of the APL's key backers, BI Director Bielaski, resigned partly from pressure over the slacker raids. On February 1, 1919, the APL itself was formally dissolved with a banquet at the Hotel Astor in New York City. All members were ordered to turn in their official-looking badges, and chapters were urged to forward their files. Many ignored the directives, leaving the fundamentals in place for a later revival.⁷³

Mobilized in the heat of war, the APL's swarm of volunteers seemed almost a parody of the tight clandestine networks at Van Deman's disposal when he pioneered the collection of intelligence to pacify the Philippines. In pursuit of his mission to serve the state, he would draw on the resources available in each successive setting. In Manila circa 1901 the contest over empire versus nation produced

covert warfare conducted with consummate skill on both sides of the imperial divide, forcing him to recruit several hundred Filipino agents whose contacts allowed them access to radical circles. In wartime America, Van Deman and his handful of skilled officers mobilized an abundance of ordinary Americans ignited by hysteria and indifferent to the rights of their immigrant neighbors. Once they were persuaded that war justified the suspension of constitutionally guaranteed freedoms, Americans unwittingly sanctioned the formation of the very “machinery” of state security that President Wilson had feared. Through both official policies and ad hoc practices, the APL gave the government the domestic equivalent of plausible deniability by engaging in illegality that could be disavowed. Most important, it was the first in a succession of civilian auxiliaries loosely allied with state security that would engage in similarly questionable practices for the next half century.

Wartime Vigilance

Although it was more professional than its APL auxiliaries, MID itself pursued a wartime mission that suffered from a similar combination of class bias and ethnic anxiety. With the league investing millions of man-hours in routine security work, MID was free to deploy its officers for covert counterintelligence against radical unions and socialist parties, using the full panoply of legal and extralegal tactics the army had developed in the colonial Philippines. From the MID's inception Van Deman viewed radical unions, particularly the International Workers of the World (IWW), the famed socialist union known as the Wobblies, as a serious security threat. To justify a sustained campaign, in June 1917 Van Deman reported that the IWW's “strong opposition to the war” threatened the army's strategic copper production from western mines and warned that its organizing activities in the California oil fields would bring “acts of sabotage leading to the curtailment of supplies.” Consequently, he conceded wide autonomy for action to his western regional command, which operated from a sprawling San Francisco headquarters that supervised thirty-seven local offices.⁷⁴ In this war on the radical left, MID's regional offices allied themselves with plant security forces and recruited hundreds of agents from private detective agencies already expert at union infiltration.⁷⁵

Apart from obvious concerns about German American loyalties, African Americans were another prime source of MID's ethnic anxieties. Wartime conscription was color-blind, and some four hundred thousand African Americans were a substantial share of the four million men mobilized, rupturing rigid Jim Crow segregation to produce both white repression and black resistance. Incidents such as the white race riots at East Saint Louis in July 1917, which left at least forty blacks dead, as well as the execution of thirteen black soldiers for rebelling against racist treatment in Houston in August, provided ample cause for African

American discontent. Within weeks of forming MID, Major Van Deman concluded, without any evidence, that "Negro subversion" stoked by German agents represented a serious security threat. To counteract the threat he recruited a skilled African American agent, Maj. Walter Loving, a Philippines Constabulary officer on home leave. For the next two years Loving served as Van Deman's top agent, moving continuously about the country to counter incidents that might provoke Negro subversion while also pressing the government to restrain the lynchings that reached a hundred by the end of war. When the Justice Department failed to mute the outraged tone of the *Chicago Defender*, a pioneering black newspaper, Loving warned its editor that there could be personal consequences, eliciting a more patriotic posture. But when the journal *Crisis*, published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), attacked the way a white commander had denigrated black officers in the Ninety-second Division, the famed "Buffalo Soldiers," Loving recommended that this commander be court-martialed. As a long-term corrective he also urged the commissioning of more black officers. Maj. Joel E. Spingarn, a MID counter-intelligence officer who also served as the NAACP's white chairman, was assigned to monitor his own organization, scoring a propaganda coup in June 1918 when he worked with the editor of *Crisis*, W. E. B. DuBois, to convene a patriotic conference of black newspaper editors. Although MID monitored racial conflicts closely, in the end white racism and black resentment were too complex and too deeply rooted in American society for any covert intervention. Acting on all this intelligence, MID's commanders urged "a square deal for the negro" in both the army and the wider society. But their recommendations had no effect on either military or government policy.⁷⁶

While monitoring African Americans, MID was also actively combating the militant organizing efforts of the IWW. From the first months of war, the union proved a disruptive force in the West, conducting mining strikes in the Southwest, militant actions on the San Francisco waterfront, and aggressive organizing in the docks, forests, and mines of the Pacific Northwest. In contrast to the eastern states, where Justice Department supervision restrained the APL's recourse to physical force, in the West military intelligence joined violent vigilante groups in a bid to crush the union.

In the first months of the war, employers and citizen groups across the West struck at the IWW in a desperate effort to contain worker discontent. To quash union agitation in the Pacific Northwest, local and federal officials mobilized the Minute Men, which soon attracted twelve thousand members, and the Legion of Loyal Loggers and Lumbermen, which the army organized as a closed-shop company union of thirty-five thousand men to secure spruce timber for aircraft production. Workers who refused to join were beaten, blacklisted, and drafted into the army. In South Dakota the APL worked with a group called the Home Guards to force unionists from the Aberdeen wheat fields, prompting a U.S. attorney to

praise the group as “the Ku Klux Klan of the Prairies.” Similarly, in the mining district of Bisbee, Arizona, the Citizens’ Protective League led mobs in packing some twelve hundred suspected IWW members into boxcars and sending them, without food or water, into the New Mexico desert. After the governors of eight western states pressed Washington to “put all IWW’s in concentration camps,” President Wilson endorsed a “secret investigation” of the union by the Justice Department. Simultaneously, MID’s Western Department, with Van Deman’s approval, organized the Volunteer Intelligence Corps, which recruited a thousand “patriots” by April 1918 as part of an abortive plan to supplant the BI as the lead agency in domestic security operations.⁷⁷

With its sprawling port facilities and surrounding forests, Seattle was a magnet for radical labor and a major battleground for MID. The region’s internal security agencies—BI, MID, and ONI—joined forces for a multifaceted attack on the IWW’s influence in the city with an innovative range of repressive tactics: the posting of army sentries along the waterfront, censorship of the mail, deportation of “undesirables,” “indiscriminate arrests” of waterfront unionists by ONI, and the “discharge of certain undesirables from the . . . ship yards.” Political intervention led to the replacement of Seattle’s police chief with one who was “a very able and patriotic officer” and to the defeat in the March 1918 elections of a pro-union mayor, Hiram C. Gill, who was discredited by an earlier indictment for taking bribes from bootleggers.⁷⁸ Adding to these pressures on the union, the local Military Police commander, Colonel M. E. Saville, mobilized a forceful civil-military attack, prosecuting “seven disloyal I.W.W.’s,” organizing “a Counter-Espionage system among the spruce workers,” and “smashing the political vice ring in Seattle” by barring Camp Lewis soldiers from the city’s bars and brothels.⁷⁹

Moving beyond the legal to the extralegal, MID’s Seattle office continued the repression with “actions” that closed union halls, tar-and-feathered union members, intercepted mail, and conducted an undercover campaign to infiltrate the IWW’s clandestine structure of coded membership and cellular networks. On May 2 the Seattle police, as MID reported approvingly, dealt a decisive blow by raiding the IWW headquarters, rounding up 213 members, and ringing the building with patrols to prevent access.⁸⁰

With Seattle’s union leaders driven underground and their members “milling about without direction,” MID shifted its attention to the Northwest’s other flashpoint at Butte, Montana, where its agents applied extreme methods to defeat an entrenched IWW chapter in the region’s copper mines, then the world’s largest.⁸¹ In June 1918 MID’s Lt. Col. F. G. Knabenshue, known as “an officer in whom Colonel Van Deman had a great deal of confidence,” wrote Washington requesting removal of the federal judge George M. Borquin for his impartiality and for “not permitting war hysteria influence to enter [the] judicial chamber.” He also asked for a denial of reappointment for U.S. attorney Burton K. Wheeler, whose refusal to indict IWW leaders had branded him a “war program obstructor.” Even

though MID's new chief, Lt. Col. Marlborough Churchill, pressed the issue hard, the Justice Department did not cooperate, replying that Wheeler, who later became a distinguished U.S. senator, was fulfilling his legal responsibilities.⁸²

So stymied, MID turned to disinformation and psychological warfare, prompting some objections from the Justice Department.⁸³ In this clandestine campaign, agent provocateur operations proved the most effective. In late August MID and its APL allies arrested twenty-seven so-called I.W.W. agitators without cause and placed thirty-two more "under surveillance." Simultaneously, MID worked with Anaconda Copper's company detectives, infiltrating the union to provoke anger and militant action against the company. When a strike began on September 13, MID led regular troops, commanded by a young Maj. Omar Bradley, in an illegal raid on the printing shop of the striking Metal Mine Workers Union—the first of many sweeps that filled the local jails.⁸⁴ As the strike continued, U.S. attorney Wheeler telegraphed Washington complaining about the "many arrests made by soldiers in Butte. Prisoners brutally treated and held without warrant or hearing." When pressed to answer for its actions, MID dismissed such criticism as "malicious propaganda."⁸⁵

Within weeks the strike collapsed, and in late September a Butte grand jury indicted twenty-four "leaders and radicals, agitators," including all of the IWW's local leaders. Although the government had forced Judge Borquin's transfer and U.S. Attorney Wheeler's resignation, MID reported that the union's attorney was mounting a disturbingly effective defense. Backed by the public "statements of Mr. Wheeler" and some sleuthing by the Thiel Detective Agency, the union's lawyers were alleging that a Pinkerton private eye employed by Anaconda Copper had worked undercover as a "stool pigeon" to foment the IWW strike. To counter this revelation, the local MID officer, Capt. J. H. Dengel, was working with the new U.S. attorney to suggest a "secret indictment" of the union leaders that would overcome these allegations and assure convictions. He was also using "undercover operatives" to split the Butte union into rival factions, hoping to cause the union local's complete "disintegration."⁸⁶ By September news of the indiscriminate and illegal arrests reached the Justice Department, sparking blistering criticism from Attorney General Gregory and forcing MID to promise restraint in future civil operations.⁸⁷

After the IWW was effectively paralyzed in Butte, MID shifted its attention back to Seattle, intent on breaking the union inside its red bastion. In October 1918 it scored an unexpected coup when Seattle police received an anonymous 4:00 a.m. phone call about a medical emergency that sent them rushing to a local hotel. There they found Mrs. C. E. Collier, the wife of the IWW's attorney, "in bed, nude, with a man other than her husband." After demanding to speak with MID's agent, Capt. J. H. Dengel, Mrs. Collier offered to provide "complete details of her husband's I.W.W. activities and turn over all the documents and data she could obtain" on the condition that "her reputation would be protected." As a

down payment on this deal, she “gave information regarding the threatened strike of shipyard workers in Seattle,” intelligence deemed so significant that it was “immediately transmitted to the Director of Military Intelligence in Washington.”⁸⁸ In a parallel review of its intelligence on the union, MID produced a report that reveals efficient mail intercepts in the Northwest, another avenue of penetration.⁸⁹ When the war ended in November 1918, MID had good reason to believe that it had restrained the IWW, at least for the time being.⁹⁰

Red Scare

At the end of World War I, there was a nationwide eruption of labor discontent and racial conflict, almost as if wartime emergency controls had momentarily suppressed a rising social ferment. In the months after the armistice, America was roiled by waterfront strikes in New York and Seattle, race riots in Chicago and Washington, militant actions among Montana’s copper miners, anarchist bombings in eight American cities, and a miners’ revolt in the West Virginia coal fields, the latter arguably the most serious armed violence that the United States experienced in twentieth century. In September 1919, 365,000 steel workers went on strike, and two months later 400,000 coal miners walked out. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer told Congress that “a wave of radicalism appears to have swept over the country.”⁹¹ After a turbulent year of such militant actions, Washington reassembled the wartime alliance of state security and civilian auxiliaries for a counterattack that mixed mass arrests and mob violence. Starting with the so-called Palmer raids of November 1919, this crackdown continued at fever pitch for six months before subsiding into routinized repression for another three years. Thus, in the midst of the army’s postwar demobilization, its military intelligence unit moved in the opposite direction, reactivating wartime assets and creating new civilian adjuncts to take the place of the now dissolved APL. Encouraged by growing congressional support for internal security, senior army commanders made further use of civil control methods, many of them learned in the colonial Philippines. The triumph of the Bolsheviks in Russia added a sinister aura to these postwar outbreaks of domestic unrest. Van Deman and the intelligence community focused on this emerging alien threat, not just socialism but now communism as well.

In January 1919, only three months after the armistice, a major maritime strike by fifteen thousand workers crippled New York Harbor. When the workers won many of their demands, MID ordered its New York office to compile lists of “reds” active in the city’s waterfront agitation and to identify the aliens among them for immediate deportation.⁹² Labor agitation in Seattle also intensified in the aftermath of war. To check the “menace” of this “extremely dangerous movement,” the local MID officer recommended reactivating wartime vigilante groups. Indicative of the heavy covert surveillance, this same officer, Capt. F. W.

Wilson, submitted summaries of twenty-five letters from IWW leaders intercepted in just one week. He also passed along a warning from an operative “working under cover in the Wobbley district” that “these Bolsheviki,” imitating current trends in Russia and Germany, “plan to have an organized army of returned soldiers in their midst who, in case of a strike, would combat the government forces and enable the strikers to seize factories.”⁹³ Within days, a strike by twenty-five thousand shipbuilders spread along the entire Seattle waterfront.⁹⁴ Ten days into the waterfront shutdown, the War Trade Board expressed concern about an impending general strike “of practically all the unions in Seattle,” reporting that “men of property here” feared the possibility of bloody riots and recommending that “strict censorship of all passenger mail be resumed.”⁹⁵ Indeed, on February 6 the unions voted “almost unanimously” for a general strike, America’s first, sending seventy-five thousand workers into the streets and prompting MID’s Seattle office to wire Washington with an urgent plea that it jail the union leaders for “inciting revolution.” In an inflammatory evocation of recent events in Russia, the telegram was rich in images that made Seattle seem a reprise of the recent revolution in Saint Petersburg: “Red banners being worn by strikers. . . . Radicals copy bolsheviki movement Russia. . . . Advocating taking over local industries.”⁹⁶ Within forty-eight hours, army troops armed with fixed bayonets and machine guns marched into Seattle and a train departed carrying forty IWW “agitators” to New York for deportation. These actions ended the strike within a day.⁹⁷

Just four months later, in July 1919, violent race riots erupted, plunging Washington, DC, into four nights of shootings that left six dead and then sweeping the South Side of Chicago with violence so extreme that military intelligence branded it a “Race War.” Predictably, the MID’s wartime liaison with the APL, Major Crockett, spiced his report of heavy casualties with the claim that “radicals [were] reported to be urging negroes to further violence.”⁹⁸ To quell these three days of racial violence in Chicago, which left thirty-eighty dead and five hundred injured, the army dispatched 4,600 troops to join the city police in occupying a riot-torn swath from the South Side to the Loop.⁹⁹ In the riot’s aftermath MID’s chief Churchill circulated a report by his leading expert on “Negro subversion,” Major Loving, who noted that since 1915 “young Negroes of high intellectual attainments . . . boldly took up the torch of Socialism.” The spark for this sudden fire of socialist enthusiasm was the “Negro soldier returning from France full of bitter resentment” only to find that “prejudice flourished as never before” after “southern white men announced the organization of a second Ku Klux Klan with the avowed object of intimidating the returning colored soldiers.” But now “the Negro has been taught to fight.” So during the Chicago riots, when a truck loaded with fifteen white men “turned up State Street at 30th and began shooting right and left into the crowd of Negroes on the sidewalks,” within a distance of six blocks “every man in it had been killed or wounded, the Negroes capturing the truck and taking the arms of the invaders.” When he resigned from MID to return

to Manila, Major Loving nominated a successor to monitor Harlem, which he called “the fountain head of all radical propaganda among Negroes.” But Chief Churchill advised his counterintelligence staff that “investigations in negro subversion” should be transferred to the Justice Department, closing this chapter in military intelligence.¹⁰⁰

As bolshevism swept Europe and postwar America proved restive, Washington gathered its forces for a protracted battle against domestic subversion, once again perceived through a prism of race tinted by imperial hues. Writing from Europe, Van Deman had already warned General Churchill at MID of “a worldwide social and political revolution” enveloping the continent that would soon threaten America. In October 1919 an Army War College conference on domestic security described the United States as an “Anglo-Saxon nation” facing the specter of revolt by ethnic radicals, making it imperative to implement “War Plan White,” a color-coded strategic scenario that the War Plans Division had prepared in the event of a Russian-style revolution by an estimated 1.5 million American radicals. Making the racial prism explicit, another War Department report stated that the greatest threats were Pan-Latinism, Pan-orientalism, and bolshevism, which had “an intimate connection of the Jews and Jewry.” On October 30, a MID colonel advised Churchill that from an intelligence perspective the nation was in “practically a state of war.” In a parallel shift at Justice that started in March 1919, a coterie of anticommunist hardliners took command: a new attorney general, A. Mitchell Palmer; BI director William J. Flynn; and the head of the BI’s new Radical Division, J. Edgar Hoover.¹⁰¹ In major cities such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, influential business leaders also pressed state and local governments for aggressive action to crush the socialist threat, sometimes funding private anti-red agencies for direct action.¹⁰²

In this changed climate MID and the Justice Department revived their network of civilian adjuncts, activating the APL and organizing returning white war veterans into the American Legion for both systematic surveillance and vigilante violence against the left. Throughout 1919 MID promoted the American Legion as its main civilian adjunct, lobbying its leadership for an antiradical commitment and encouraging its initial growth to a membership of 120,000 in thirty-one states.¹⁰³ In October, moreover, MID’s Maj. Thomas Crockett, one of the APL’s civilian founders, informed General Churchill that “the old American Protective League of Chicago has been reorganized . . . under the name of the Patriotic American League” and had recently assisted the army in nearby Gary, Indiana, during that city’s steel strike.¹⁰⁴ Beyond these two stalwarts, MID encouraged multiple military networks for domestic surveillance, including, at Van Deman’s suggestion, an organization of MID’s own veterans and regular monitoring by army recruiters who should, MID ordered, submit weekly reports on “the numerical strength of the extreme radical or ‘Red’ element in your district.”¹⁰⁵

From November 1919 to January 1920, the nation's internal security agencies, BI and MID, unleashed their civilian adjuncts for three months of aggressive action against the left known as the "red scare" or the "Palmer raids." From MID's regional office in Chicago, Major Crockett oversaw the American Legion's attacks on socialists across the Midwest. The Chicago post announced a plan for "some night riding or what is known as 'Ku Klux' work . . . destroying stores that sell radical literature." The legion's Milwaukee post raided the local IWW offices, confiscating their literature. In Cincinnati eight hundred legionnaires ransacked radical offices, burning hundreds of pounds of socialist texts.¹⁰⁶ In the Pacific Northwest, the legion launched a "war of extermination against members of the I.W.W." that, in the view of one historian, "practically destroyed the Wobblies" in that region. During these months of red scare, veterans' posts in cities such as San Diego and Stockton harassed union leaders with violence that swept along the West Coast, culminating in an armed legion attack on the IWW hall at Centralia, Washington. At the urging of the local Lumbermen's Association, the town's legion post decided to "burn 'em out" as a way to celebrate Armistice Day 1919. But the unionists fought back, killing four of the attacking legionnaires. That night the veterans evened the score by publicly torturing, mutilating, and lynching an IWW member.¹⁰⁷

During this winter of repression, the red hysteria drew federal agencies, state governments, and local vigilantes into a combined assault on the radical left. At the instigation of New York City's social elite, who assembled at the Union League Club, the state government in Albany formed the Joint Legislative Committee to Investigate Seditious Activities. Under the leadership of state senator Clayton R. Lusk, this committee used APL members, state troopers, and private detectives to conduct months of raids that culminated in a November sweep of seventy-three radical offices in New York City. The raiders beat suspects at gunpoint, seized tons of office papers, arrested over a thousand supposed subversives, and uncovered what the *New York Times* condemned as a sinister "plot against America." The driving force in New York's effort was two MID veterans who drafted the Union League's report on bolshevism and directed Lusk's operations as his special counsel, infusing their investigations with MID's illegal methods for break-ins, mail intercepts, secret interrogations, and violent raids. Nationwide, this repression reached a peak on January 2, 1920, when the BI's J. Edgar Hoover mobilized local police and civilian auxiliaries for raids in thirty-three cities that resulted in the arrest of four thousand suspected radicals.¹⁰⁸

Slowly public hysteria gave way to a sober realization that the raids had been excessive. Desperate to stoke the fears that had made him a front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination to succeed Wilson, Attorney General Palmer announced in April 1920 that the nation faced an immediate red "revolution" on May Day, just weeks away. When that day passed uneventfully, a newspaper

chorus of “universal laughter” mocked Palmer’s timorous appearance surrounded by guards, dooming his candidacy and discrediting his campaign of repression. On May 20 New York governor Al Smith vetoed a package of harsh antiradical legislation called the Lusk laws, insisting that the state should “not attempt to suppress by law those who do not agree with us.” In the waning weeks of President Wilson’s administration, the future attorney general Harlan Fiske Stone advised a U.S. Senate committee investigating Palmer’s raids that they were an “abuse of power” that had produced “intolerable injustice and cruelty to individuals.”¹⁰⁹

Armed Uprising

Complementing its postwar undercover operations, the army also dispatched infantry to quell domestic disturbances, whether race riots in Chicago or strikes across America, allowing its Philippine veterans another chance to apply their colonial expertise. After the nation’s largest steel strike in decades erupted at Gary, Indiana, in September 1919, Gen. Leonard Wood, the veteran colonial officer, led fifteen thousand troops into the city to impose a “modified martial law,” supported by APL men who swept up suspected radicals for interrogation by MID officers.¹¹⁰

In this same tumultuous period, Gen. Harry Bandholtz, the former chief of the Philippines Constabulary, used psychological methods developed during his years combating Filipino radicals to quash a militant miners’ revolt in West Virginia. After a massive increase in membership during the wartime coal boom, the United Mine Workers (UMW) tried to consolidate its gains by launching a nationwide strike in November 1919. Although mines were shut down in fourteen states, the strike collapsed under a combination of federal pressure and a flood of coal from the nonunion fields in southern West Virginia, a strategic oversight the UMW leadership was now determined to correct. Throughout 1920 armed miners in Mingo and Logan counties squared off against West Virginia state deputies and Baldwin-Felts detectives, producing a dramatic shootout in the streets of Matewan in May. There local miners led by Sheriff Sid Hatfield, a descendant of the clan that had fought the famous Hatfield-McCoy feud, shot and killed seven security men. In November the army dispatched a fresh battalion under Col. Herman Hall, a long-serving veteran of the Philippines Constabulary, who facilitated a fragile truce during his short occupation of Mingo County.¹¹¹

In early 1921 the conflict was renewed when anti-union Republicans took office in Charleston and Washington. In May the recently inaugurated governor Ephraim F. Morgan, a close ally of the mine owners, declared a state of “insurrection and riot” and sent sixty state constables into Mingo County to seize the miners’ weapons, producing the famed “Three Days Battle” along the Tug River that left four dead. On August 1, Baldwin-Felts detectives gunned down Matewan’s Sheriff Hatfield as he entered a county courthouse unarmed, a brutal murder

that outraged unionists. In protest nine days later, the UMW's "General" Bill Blizzard massed five thousand armed miners and began advancing on Logan, their ranks swelled by fifteen thousand supporters during the march.¹¹²

At 3:05 a.m. on August 26, as some eighteen thousand armed miners seemed destined for a bloody shootout with the Logan County deputies, General Bandholtz, accompanied by a single aide, stepped off the train at the Charleston depot, initiating an intervention by two former constabulary chiefs that would soon defuse this social conflict. Unimpressed by the governor's demand for federal troops, Bandholtz met privately with the UMW's two state leaders. "These are your people. I am going to give you a chance to save them, and if you cannot turn them back, we are going to snuff them out like that," the general said, reaching out to snap his fingers right under the nose of union president Frank Keeney, a charismatic local leader whose fiery words had sparked the armed march.¹¹³ Keeney capitulated, promising that "he would act immediately by . . . using his influence to have the persons involved discontinue their march" — much as Filipino nationalists had aborted an armed demonstration at Manila in 1911 when confronted by Bandholtz.¹¹⁴ To lend substance to his threats, the general telegraphed the army's deputy chief of staff, his old constabulary comrade James G. Harbord, asking for immediate mobilization of troops armed with artillery, machine guns, and poison gas. As the UMW leaders read Bandholtz's ultimatum at mass meetings, the miners, realizing they risked confronting the full force of the U.S. Army, agreed to disperse.¹¹⁵ After less than two days in the state, Bandholtz boarded a train back to Washington.¹¹⁶

Within hours, however, a posse of sheriff's deputies and state police renewed the conflict when they attempted a midnight arrest of union marchers, sparking a shootout that left two miners dead. After the unionists massed to resume their march and some three thousand anti-union "militiamen" occupied blocking positions atop Blair Mountain, both sides began blasting away with rifles, firing over a million bullets. On August 29, Governor Morgan appealed to Washington for army troops to stop this "Bolshevist" uprising. Within a day, President Warren G. Harding issued a "cease and desist proclamation."¹¹⁷

By the time General Bandholtz arrived back in Charleston at noon on September 1, there were some ten thousand armed men on the firing lines along Blair Mountain. State militia held the ridge behind concrete bunkers backed by machine guns, while some 7,500 miners probed these defenses along a line of attack that stretched, the newspapers said, for twenty-five miles. Instead of obeying the president's dispersal order, the miners, fearful of being gunned down by the Baldwin-Felts guards, replied, "You send in the troops to protect us and . . . we will gladly surrender to you." Bandholtz, with the full support of the UMW's national leadership, telegraphed General Harbord asking for the immediate dispatch of federal forces. With 2,100 well-armed infantry and aircraft commanded by Gen. Billy Mitchell flying reconnaissance, Bandholtz arrayed his troops at the

base of Blair Mountain for a pincer's envelopment on September 3. But just as his troops were poised to engage with lethal effect, the general ordered a sudden cease-fire. For the next four days, without firing a shot, his troops demobilized some 5,400 miners, confiscated 278 firearms, and sent everyone home. Sixteen men died in the five-day Battle of Blair Mountain, but none were shot by army troops.¹¹⁸ Once he had defused the situation by ordering the "insurgents . . . returned peaceably to their homes" without any arrests, Bandholtz advised the governor that "State peace officers will now be able without difficulty to serve process" against the strikers. Accordingly, state and federal courts soon filed murder and treason charges against some six hundred miners, including the UMW leaders Blizzard and Kenney, whose trials dragged on for three years.¹¹⁹

By employing the same subtle strategies he had practiced in the Philippines, Bandholtz had scored an otherwise elusive victory for the mine owners, avoiding the heroic violence that would have given the union new martyrs and stripping the strikers of the arms they needed to resist Baldwin-Felts detectives. Unlike Governor Morgan and like-minded conservatives, Bandholtz had the advantage of colonial experience, which taught him that the threat of armed force was far more intimidating than its application. Exhausted by the eighteen-month struggle, the union's West Virginia membership fell from fifty thousand miners in 1921 to only six hundred a decade later, a decline "just short of a deathblow."¹²⁰

Father of the Blacklist

In the aftermath of the November 1918 armistice, America's four-million-strong wartime army quickly demobilized and within six months the number of military intelligence officers dropped from a peak of 1,700 to only 230.¹²¹ When President Wilson left office in 1921, the incoming Republicans began winding down his aggressive internal security operations. In July 1921 Congress finally declared World War I over and the military returned to peacetime status, reducing the intelligence command to colonel grade. As MID slashed staff to just twenty-four officers and demolished its once formidable records system, the army decided it should "drop out Negative Intelligence activities and all counterintelligence be entrusted to DJ [Department of Justice] in case of war." By 1924 both War and Justice had curtailed most internal security operations, with BI's force of special agents sliced in half and its records closed to the patriotic groups that once had open access. That May, Attorney General Harlan Fiske Stone, worried that "a secret police may become a menace to free government," announced that "the Bureau of Investigation is not concerned with political or other opinions of individuals." Its acting director, J. Edgar Hoover, generally complied with this directive, although he continued to accept "passive" intelligence from civilian adjuncts. In well-publicized hearings that same year Congress investigated Justice's role in the red scare, finding that the department had leaked "secret" security reports to voluntary groups such as the APL, adding fuel to the firestorm of public hysteria. In

an act symbolic of the government's retreat from surveillance, Secretary of War Henry Stimson closed MID's cipher section in 1929, saying famously, "Gentlemen do not read each other's mail."¹²²

After the war Van Deman's career followed this downward trend, denying him any major intelligence mission. Returning from the Paris peace conference in mid-1919, Colonel Van Deman found his successor firmly ensconced and MID shedding officers fast, relegating him to a brief posting as General Churchill's deputy before the army shipped him off to the Philippines. In 1921, writing from Manila where he now commanded an infantry division, Van Deman confessed to his old comrade Dennis Nolan a sense of boredom with "living in a cantonment" and a deep regret that "there is, of course, no chance" that he could ever again do "the thing that I feel that I can do—Intelligence." Not even his later promotion to general and award of the coveted second star as major general seemed to salve this sense of frustration.¹²³

In one of history's accidents, however, General Van Deman's retirement in 1929 soon invested him with a final, far-reaching intelligence mission through the convergence of two countervailing trends: Washington's sharp reduction in internal security and a deepening economic depression that fueled both communism at home and fascism abroad. On the eve of a second world war in 1938, the FBI had just two agents on communist detail across America and army counter-intelligence employed only three officers and eighteen agents worldwide. In Washington itself, the entire Military Intelligence Division had only twenty officers and a meager budget of \$125,000.¹²⁴

Van Deman's penultimate posting as commander of Fort Rosecrans in San Diego led him to retire there at a time when California was becoming a veritable nation within the nation through industrial innovation in aeronautics and cultural creativity in cinema. Moreover, in this Depression decade of nationwide social conflict "the furor was fiercest in California." According to historian Ellen Schrecker, San Francisco's three-month maritime strike in 1934 "plunged the West Coast into a state of virtual class warfare." In this climate, a dynamic branch of the Communist Party expanded rapidly across California, creating a new center of radical activism outside the old battlegrounds of New York or Chicago and thus opening a void in the nation's counterintelligence that Van Deman was poised to fill. By the time he started his anticommunist archive in 1932, Sacramento's Bureau of Identification, along with other state and local agencies, had moved beyond routine criminal work to focus on antisubversion activities, compiling, for example, a detailed ten-page report for the governor on "Communism in California."¹²⁵ The sum of all these trends would soon invest the general's regional role with national import.

But Van Deman had not just chosen California. He had chosen Southern California during interwar decades when the state's politics were defined by a tectonic divide between radical, union-shop San Francisco and reactionary, open-shop Los Angeles. During the red scare of 1919, Southern California's corporate leaders

had created militant anticommunist groups and pressed their local police to form antsubversion squads that were soon notorious for attacking dissenters with arbitrary arrests and brutal beatings. Exemplifying this anticommunist zeal, San Diego's unit, responding to a state inquiry in 1935, listed the city's 38 party leaders, 102 leaflets distributed, and 179 speakers heard during the past three years. With a similar thoroughness, the Los Angeles "red squad," led by the notorious Capt. William "Red" Hynes, quickly tallied the names of 36,725 local communist supporters and a radical press with a combined circulation of 24,900.¹²⁶ Just as the Philippines transformed Van Deman from military careerist into a master spy, so Southern California changed his modest retirement plans from topographical mapping to anticommunist agitation.

From his comfortable home at 3141 Curlew Street in San Diego, Van Deman and his wife, childless and increasingly friendless, worked tirelessly for nearly a quarter century. Their incessant typing, filing, and cross-referencing animated an elaborate information exchange among members of the state's public-private security network: army and navy intelligence, police red squads, and civilian groups across California. Though long retired from government service, the general continued to receive classified reports from federal, state, and local agencies. Van Deman's private archive swelled over time to a quarter million files on suspected subversives by the time of his death in 1952. But following his trademark method in Manila and Washington, this mass of documentation was reduced to a single card for each suspect. His modest bungalow thus became a veritable search engine for intelligence professionals struggling to lift the mask of aliases that the Communist Party had donned since the red-scare round-up of 1919–20. Apart from the raw documents, the general maintained a reference library of rare communist publications and an archive of identification photos. Beyond typing and filing, Van Deman's web also included operatives inside the state's ethnic communities, an undercover agent in the aircraft industry, assets with access to Hollywood's leftist circles, private eyes in the hire of anticommunist groups, and citizen sleuths across the state—all with their names carefully concealed by a numbered code system that the army and FBI would struggle to decipher after his death.¹²⁷

Though Van Deman remains an obscure figure, specialists have noted his central role in the anticommunist movement. The army analyst who assessed his files in 1971 wrote years later, as a distinguished historian, that Van Deman, absent any "federal agency fighting the radicals," built an influential information clearinghouse that "left the other patriotic groups in the dust." With funds from the FBI and army, he "ruled a large and sophisticated spy network."¹²⁸ A leading lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union called the general "one of the giants of anti-communism, a super-hawk, . . . a phobic nativist red hunter" whose "undercover network penetrated not only the Communist Party but a whole spectrum of liberal targets, including religious, civil rights, and labor organizations."¹²⁹ Through his single-minded focus, unequalled experience, and ceaseless

efforts, Van Deman became the spider at the center of a spreading web of domestic surveillance.¹³⁰

While catholic in his distaste for extremism in any form, Van Deman's experience watching bolshevism spread across postwar Europe in 1919 had left him obsessed with the threat of communism. Convinced that the army's consignment of counterintelligence to the FBI was a serious mistake, he prodded the War Department with periodic reminders, writing in 1933 that "G2 should take more aggressive attitude toward subversive activities" and again in 1935 to advise that ONI is "much concerned re. subversive elements making . . . headway in infiltrating into airplane factories in So. California."¹³¹ Under the gathering clouds of World War II, he would also monitor the state's Italian American and Japanese American communities carefully, helping the army revitalize its counterintelligence capacity while holding fast to his abiding preoccupation with the communist threat. If his army service in World War I had earned him the informal title "father of U.S. military intelligence," his private sleuthing in retirement should earn him another: "father of the American blacklist."¹³²

In setting paradigms for detecting domestic disloyalty, Van Deman persisted in his earlier imperial mode, seeing subversion in terms of both radical ideology and alien ethnicity. Revolutionary ideals, whether Philippine nationalism or American communism, remained the ultimate threat. Yet in his view the means for the dissemination of these dangerous ideas was often ethnic. During the decade before Pearl Harbor, Van Deman, as he refracted threats through this prism of race, was particularly concerned with Japanese espionage in Southern California and northern Mexico, producing reports whose sum gave an unsettling sense that imperial Japan's intelligence was probing America's weakest frontier, its undefended southwestern border.¹³³

Reflecting his overarching concern with communism, however, Van Deman soon shifted his focus from external to internal threats. In early 1932 he began assembling his anticommunist archive with its very first document, an unsourced report dated January 27, duly marked "R-1" and detailing the activities of one Richard Walker, a Hollywood chauffeur described as affiliated with a "suspected anarchist" and "boastful of his association . . . with notable Germans, especially cinema actors."¹³⁴ Once the general began probing for communism in deeply conservative San Diego, an amazing array of unsolicited information began arriving in his Curlew Street mailbox. Indicative of his enormous authority among local anticommunists, when he telephoned a San Diego police lieutenant in January 1932 to suggest the "attendance of a plain clothesman" at a local communist gathering, headquarters immediately dispatched Agent SD-2. Showing the general's uncanny timing and impeccable sources, this operative's report revealed that the meeting had been called "for the purpose of organizing a communist party in San Diego" and was attended by eighty "poor people, seemingly lower order of intelligence." San Diego's red squad forwarded these documents to

the general, who marked them R-2a and R-2b before tucking them into his infant archive.¹³⁵

Other documents soon followed from residents of Southern California ready to enlist in the general's campaign against communism. The sergeant at arms at San Diego City Hall wrote complaining about one Harvey C. Norsworthy, who should, for no particular reason, "be investigated regarding Communistic Party." A local private eye, Larry E. Belger, forwarded a blank membership card for the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union, suspiciously leftist in its demands. The San Diego county clerk supplied the names of residents who had posted bond for arrested communists. A Los Angeles chiropractor, Charles Hoffmann, reported that Rev. Edwin P. Ryland of the city's Congregational Church was "the #1 Soviet propagandist in the State."¹³⁶

By the late 1930s Van Deman's incoming reports passed the two-thousand mark and his files grew to forty thousand oversized four-by-six inch cards, thus achieving the critical mass necessary to make his archive an intelligence asset. Essential to its quality were regular reports from undercover agents, sometimes in the employ of the police or private security firms, sometimes working directly for the general. In July 1937, for example, Agent A-42 attended a meeting of "the newly formed San Diego branch of the American League against War and Fascism . . . at the residence of Mrs. Emily Hillkowitz, 136 Redwood Street," adding that the "the writer has been angling for six months for an invitation to the Hillkowitz domicile." He now used that access to discover "an excellent library on Communism," but lacked the time to locate the suspected "short wave sending outfit and ascertain its wave length."¹³⁷

Among his many informed sources, the Better America Federation, funded by major Los Angeles corporations, sent the retired general reports from its undercover operatives and data from the files that filled its sprawling downtown office suite.¹³⁸ Van Deman also worked closely with the Civic Council of Defense, Inc., which infiltrated every leftist meeting in Long Beach, a city that served as a commercial port and navy base for Los Angeles.¹³⁹ In 1938, for example, its undercover operative monitored a local rally for striking Ford auto workers and reported on a speech by Assemblyman Sam Yorty, later the three-term mayor of Los Angeles. Yorty preached socialism, saying that "the large fortunes such as Ford's were not made by Ford, but by his workers" and calling for "government ownership of railroads."¹⁴⁰

Another strand in Van Deman's spreading net was military intelligence. Agents for both the navy's ONI and the army's G-2, its overall intelligence branch, ignored security procedures and sent him classified documents through the mail. In June 1937, for example, the army's San Francisco office sent the general sensitive operational intelligence about a Soviet agent, Leon Gershevich, describing him as "Asst Chief OGPU [Joint State Political Directorate] Seattle. . . . Official courier between NYC & Seattle. . . . Member of Russian CP [Communist Party],

Comm. Intern. Com.” Indeed, to speed the routing of secret documents to Van Deman this army office made up a special rubber stamp marked “VanD.”¹⁴¹ With similar generosity ONI forwarded “confidential” intelligence about the international movements of communist agents.¹⁴² In return Van Deman sent G-2 San Francisco “comprehensive information” about the formation of the left-leaning American Friends of the Chinese People. Promptly, G-2’s Lt. Col. H. R. Oldfield replied with intelligence about the Japanese National Salvation Association, whose leader was “Karl Hama (real name Kamamoto Hanna and alias Ken, Uchida and Goso Yoneda).”¹⁴³ From his cross-referenced files, the general already knew, via an ONI report received two weeks earlier, that Karl Hama was a Japanese, “5 feet 7 inches tall, light in color for one of his race,” who edited San Francisco’s Japanese-language communist paper, *Rodo Shimbun*, and was living with communist “Elaine Black as man and wife,” the same Elaine Black who, Van Deman would learn six weeks later, had been an impassioned speaker before striking Salinas lettuce workers.¹⁴⁴

Dress Rehearsal for Blacklisting

By the mid-1930s leftist influence in the film industry was emerging as one of the chief targets of Van Deman’s anticommunist network. In a bid to influence this powerful “weapon of mass culture,” the party’s New York headquarters sent its top cultural “commissar,” V. J. Jerome, out west to organize a Hollywood branch in 1936, starting with his fellow writers. Within a few years script writers represented about half of the three hundred party members in Hollywood, and communists made up a quarter of the active membership in the Screen Writers Guild.¹⁴⁵ In 1936 the general typed a card for Ring Lardner Jr., a talented writer at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios and future Oscar winner, that read, “Subject reported by good authority to be a *rabid Communist* and reported to be recruiting members for the YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE in Los Angeles.” The source for this report was “Commandant, Third Naval District, New York,” an indication of the general’s spreading net.¹⁴⁶

Showing the party’s increasing sensitivity to surveillance, an undercover agent, writing from a Watts mail drop, attended an August meeting of “Hollywood Unit, J-8, the Communist Party, at 1325 N. McCadden Place, Hollywood,” with “surnames banned” so he could only identify five individuals, including the “wife of a screen writer.”¹⁴⁷ A month later another agent working undercover as a “unit organizer” for the party reported that its “Hollywood sub-section” had already recruited an impressive 450 members. When a strike swept the Salinas lettuce fields, this agent reported fiery speeches by “Elaine Black, well known Communist agitator,” and financial support from “a group of Hollywood Motion Pictures Actors, who are known to be sympathetic towards the Party,” including James Cagney, Melvyn Douglas, Robert Montgomery, Gary Cooper, and Boris

Karloff. Two months later this same operative monitored a Los Angeles stage production of Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here*, which, like all the plays produced as part of the Federal Theater Project, reportedly reflected "the strong Communist leadership in the theater group."¹⁴⁸

As the shadow world of covert operations fused with movieland fantasy, federal operatives became entangled in an eerie case that seemed, in both its political intrigues and personal betrayals, a full dress rehearsal for the postwar blacklisting that would divide Hollywood so bitterly. The story began in December 1937 when the Beverly Hills police arrested a communist organizer, Arthur Kent, and his wife for burglary. Facing serious prison time for both himself and his wife, Kent gave the police a signed affidavit with a dramatic account of his communist career that read like a film noir screenplay, a document that soon found its way into Van Deman's files.

After majoring in music at Yale College during the 1920s, Kent wound up in San Francisco where he joined the party in 1931 and operated a swanky restaurant for four years before quitting for full-time work as a communist organizer. His duties for the party in this period included building an organization of progressive Democrats that put seventeen candidates in the state assembly, Sam Yorty of Los Angeles included. After steady communist gains that culminated in San Francisco's famed general strike of 1934, crisis swept the party ranks on August 11, 1936, when the "chain-draped body" of Raoul Lewis Cherbourg, a seaman who had recently broken with the comrades, was pulled from San Francisco Bay. At the news, said Kent, leaders of the communist "strong arm squad" that operated on the city's waterfront became "very panicky" and sought legal advice "to help out with the alibis." A year later at the 1937 annual convention of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in Portland, Oregon, the president of the leftist Longshoremen's Union, Harry Bridges, was taped in his hotel room talking about communist control over his union—a serious indiscretion that could facilitate deportation back to his native Australia. This tape was particularly troubling, said Kent, since it "showed that Bridges had been having a sex party with somebody named Norma, wife of one of the [union] delegates," creating the threat of a damaging scandal among his union's rank and file.¹⁴⁹

At this low ebb in the party's fortunes, Arthur Kent became an expropriator. Learning that he had spoken to Portland police about the hotel room tape, the leadership suspended Kent and assigned him "to raise funds, so as to show I was going forward with the Party." Apparently focusing on the wealthy West Los Angeles area, the party set up a special "apparatus" under Dr. Inez Decker and Sam Cherniak, head of the local Communist Party Finance Committee, to raise "money for the reserve fund." Working exclusively in his assigned territory of Beverly Hills, Kent committed about twenty robberies from "fashionable film colony homes" between July and November 1937, breaking windows for entry, cleaning out valuables, fencing the goods, and paying off the party. Communist

leaders evidently reveled in this racket, for Kent claimed he once witnessed a “loud argument” at the Los Angeles home of Dr. Inez Decker and her husband George Shoaf about dividing up “three magnificent fur coats” stolen by other party expropriators.¹⁵⁰

For five months, the robberies went off without a hitch. In late November, however, the movie comedian G. P. Huntley surprised the burglar at his home on North Maple Drive and jotted down the license plate number as Kent drove off, a clue that eventually led Beverly Hills police to the suspect in Ojai and then to a cottage in Carpinteria filled with stolen goods worth fifty thousand dollars. At his court appearance Kent, nattily dressed in Ivy League fashions, made a preliminary confession, calling his robberies a “compulsory social tax on the rich to benefit the Communist Party” and claiming that he had donated 90 percent of the proceeds to the comrades. In a public statement, the party’s District 13 insisted it had ousted the Kents five months earlier “on charges of being unreliable adventurers.” After the prosecutor agreed to dismiss the charges against his wife, Kent dictated a twelve-page affidavit to a police stenographer loaded with damning allegations, launching the next phase of his checkered career as a professional stool pigeon.¹⁵¹

After his affidavit received extensive coverage in both the *San Francisco Examiner* and the *Los Angeles Times*, Arthur Kent disappeared into the county jail for nine months until the Republican right made his charges a cause célèbre in the 1938 state elections. On November 3, just five days before the balloting, the newly established House Special Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities (HUAC), chaired by Representative Martin Dies, Jr., released Kent’s claims that communists were running a “campaign to control California” through the Democratic gubernatorial slate. According to his affidavit, during the state legislature’s 1937 session five Democratic members of the state assembly who “were all members of the Communist party,” Jack B. Tenney and Sam Yorty included, had assigned all the leftist bills they wanted passed to a knowing ally, state Senator Culbert L. Olson—now the Democratic candidate for governor. On election eve the lead editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* denounced the “Communist-supported, CIO-supported Culbert Olson” as the man who would “throw open the schoolhouses to Communist meetings.” Such media sensationalism had been critical to Republican Frank Merriam’s defeat of Upton Sinclair’s populist candidacy during the last elections in 1934. This time, however, Kent’s red-baiting failed to boost Governor Merriam’s reelection bid and he lost decisively to Olson, even in traditionally conservative Los Angeles County.¹⁵²

When news of Kent’s arrest and affidavit first grabbed headlines, Van Deman’s apparatus bounced messages back and forth in an attempt to detect the real identities of the communists he mentioned. In such painstaking analysis, when large errors sprang from minute details, Van Deman’s role moved beyond mere collecting to active collaboration. Within days of the arrest the general was corresponding with army G-2 in San Francisco to clear up confusion over the many aliases of

“Arthur Kent @ Arthur Scott @ James Allen.” After reviewing the eight sources cited on its central index card for “SCOTT, Arthur, alias Margolis,” G-2 advised the general that its error in failing to establish that Arthur Kent and Scott were “identical” arose from a red herring report that “Scott” was the “sweetie of Norma Pettrae; his real name Margules.” This incorrect entry “should have referred to Benjamin Margolis,” the left-wing Los Angeles attorney, as Norma’s par-amour. The general, of course, had not made this mistake.¹⁵³

As for Kent’s claim that he was working for “Cherniak, the head of the Communist Party Finance Committee,” G-2 noted, in response to Van Deman’s suggestions, that “The Sam Chernyok (Sta. Barbara) you mentioned appears identical with Sam Cherniak (@Sol Woloch).” Army intelligence appended a summary of his file illustrating the depth and diversity of its sources for tracking party members: “Long Beach 11909 (1932: Crim.Sydnicalism). H-dk ch.curly; E-dk.blue; 2-144; A-32 (1932); former manager Coop. Restaurant, Boyle Heights . . . Photo on page 6, Westn. Worker 12-27-37 as manager of Sta. Barbara circulation drive.”¹⁵⁴

With those key figures identified, G-2’s Lieutenant Colonel Oldfield wrote Van Deman that the George H. Shoaf mentioned in Kent’s fur coat story was an alias for V. J. Jerome, an editor of *The Communist*, who had been working in Hollywood since November 1936 “under Party directives and assigned duty of educating movie colony along party political lines. Reported as common-law (?) husband of Dr. Inez C. Decker, and living at 764 No. Hoover St., Los Angeles.”¹⁵⁵ Indicating the depth of this cover, the Better America Federation forwarded two studies showing the lineage of these parallel identities—one for “George H. Shoaf,” who appeared in eleven press articles from 1926 to 1937 as a West Coast socialist turned communist, and another for “V. J. Jerome,” who showed up in a dozen articles from 1932 to 1938 as a communist active in both New York and California.¹⁵⁶ Clearly, Communist Party aliases were elaborate, making Van Deman’s archive a valuable finding-aid for effective counterintelligence.

World War II

As war engulfed China and Europe in the late 1930s, military intelligence again expanded, lending credence to General Van Deman’s earlier complaints about the army’s abandonment of its once formidable counterintelligence function. In 1935 he wrote the chief of G-2 in Washington offering him his “rather extensive records covering both organizations and personnel throughout the country.” A year later Chief of Staff Malin Craig, concerned about the communist role in the 1934 San Francisco strike, began a long-term renewal of army intelligence. With General Craig’s support, the new G-2 chief developed plans to control civil disturbances across the country, quietly resuming antisubversion work under the army’s earlier “War Plan White.”¹⁵⁷

In this process of intelligence rearmament, the diffuse domestic surveillance—divided among federal, state, and private sources—proved resilient. To compensate for meager interwar intelligence collection, Oldfield, the chief of G-2 San Francisco, wrote Van Deman in January 1938 about plans “to expand our subversive data base here” by sending staff to collect information “directly” from the only sources he deemed reliable: “from Clarence Morrill’s files” in the state Bureau of Criminal Identification at Sacramento; from “Chet Flint in Alameda,” who “maintained voluminous files” for the county’s district attorney; from the “FBI here”; and finally from Van Deman himself.¹⁵⁸ To refresh the depleted federal data, Van Deman also advised G-2 in Washington that the “excellent records of the Better America Federation [in Los Angeles] . . . should be taken over by the FBI.”¹⁵⁹

At this high tide of New Deal liberalism, the political climate was not sympathetic to red-baiting, and the anticommunist network moved cautiously. In Washington the Senate Civil Liberties Committee, led by Wisconsin’s Robert La Follette Jr., was wrapping up a four-year investigation of corporate union busting by a secret army of “3,871 industrial spies” whose methods ranged from the illegal to the brutal.¹⁶⁰ Similar pressures led to the dissolution of the Los Angeles red squad in 1938 after several of its top officers were convicted of trying to bomb a private eye in a bizarre corruption-driven vendetta that repulsed the public. Even HUAC’s first anticommunist hearings in 1938 seemed inept, endorsing Arthur Kent’s dubious allegations and charging that Hollywood’s darling child star Shirley Temple was a communist dupe. But committee chair Martin Dies kept hammering away with accusations of fifth-column treason inside the ranks of the Roosevelt administration until the White House was forced to accept him, in late 1940, as “an authorized co-worker” in the FBI’s “anti-subversive campaign.”¹⁶¹

As war grew imminent, Van Deman played a central role in negotiating the “Delimitations Agreement” between the army and FBI that conceded the bureau complete control over domestic counterintelligence. Finding the army unresponsive to his insistent suggestions, Van Deman had begun courting J. Edgar Hoover in 1937, writing the FBI director regularly to offer his files and urging him to take charge of the “counter-espionage work.” Hoover admitted some months later that “no plans have been formulated,” and, over the next year, sent senior agents from Los Angeles for briefings and a close review of the general’s files. Meanwhile, Van Deman’s former deputy at MID, Alexander Coxe, was corresponding with the army’s G-2, Gen. Sherman Miles, warning that any future relationship with “civilian spy hunting organizations such as ‘The American Protective League’” would prove “very dangerous.” Meanwhile, with the president’s support Hoover won the lion’s share of expanded counterintelligence funds in 1938. Two years later he was given responsibility for all “foreign intelligence work in the Western Hemisphere,” prompting him to request another five hundred agents for these missions. When Hoover convened a “highly confidential” National

Intelligence Conference in May 1940, General Miles invited Van Deman and Coxé to attend as his advisers. Both were impressed with the “thoroughness, magnitude, and soundness” of the FBI’s plan to control all “allegations of espionage, sabotage, and such related matters.” Van Deman also accompanied General Miles to a follow-up meeting with Hoover to finalize “a complete agreement on the delineation of responsibility,” which was signed by President Franklin Roosevelt two days later. A revised counterintelligence compact in February 1942 invested the FBI with “investigation of all activities coming under the categories of espionage, subversion, and sabotage,” while wartime exigencies soon added “black bag” break-ins, warrantless wiretaps, and surreptitious mail opening to the bureau’s *de facto* powers. The FBI also enforced the Alien Registration Act of 1940, known as the Smith Act, making it a felony to advocate “overthrowing . . . the government of the United States.” So armed, the bureau compiled a “Security Index” of suspects to be rounded up in any emergency; and, along with military intelligence, mobilized over three hundred thousand informers to secure defense plants against wartime threats that ultimately proved “negligible.”¹⁶²

These events, particularly the May 1940 summit, integrated Van Deman into the revitalized counterintelligence community. He was recognized as a confidential source in the FBI’s “Special Service Contact Program,” and soon sent J. Edgar Hoover an elaborate plan for surveillance to “guard against expert sabotage activities in munitions plants, aircraft plants, etc.” In December, FBI headquarters issued “special instructions” for a San Diego agent to “devote himself exclusively to the task of reviewing General Van Deman’s files and extracting all information of value to the Bureau.” Three years later the liaison officer between the FBI and G-2, Col. Leslie R. Forney, assigned two full-time clerks to his San Diego archive, paid from the “army’s confidential fund.” When a rival intelligence agency, the Office of Strategic Services, offered Van Deman a senior position on the West Coast, the old general spurned the overture after learning that OSS did not share intelligence with the FBI. Through these contacts, Hoover soon came to consider Van Deman “as a warm friend.”¹⁶³ This unique quasi-official status, moreover, allowed the general to insert unverified civilian suspicions into government files and later disseminate military intelligence to civilian activists—making him a catalyst for the renewed public-private alliance that would animate the postwar anticommunist movement.

Even as its operations expanded on the eve of war, army intelligence continued to filter its reports through the ethnic prism adopted at its founding in 1917. Although G-2 was constrained by its ingrained imperial mind-set, in this sense Van Deman was the analytical superior of his successors, an empiricist who could learn from new information.¹⁶⁴ While serving as an adviser to the War Department from 1941 to 1946, for which he later received the Legion of Merit, Van Deman spent the war in San Diego presiding over an ever-increasing exchange of information via his private-public network.¹⁶⁵ Living amid the cultural diversity

of Southern California rather than the insularity of official Washington, the general not only drew data from his ethnic informants, but he seemed to learn from them, moving beyond his agency's Anglo template for American nationhood. While G-2 would favor forced internment for ethnic Americans of Axis ancestry at the beginning of the war, the general would now reject the military's equation of ethnicity with threat. Whether motivated by empathy or pragmatism, he would oppose individual relocation orders for agents affiliated with his Italian American net and argue strongly against the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans.

Among Van Deman's many numbered agents, the former California state welfare commissioner Dr. Frank Gigliotti, known to the general's archive as operative A-70, provided both exceptional information about Italian espionage and empathy toward Italian Americans. During the Sons of Italy national conference at Philadelphia in November 1940, Gigliotti lobbied hard to defeat a candidate with "very definite Pro-Fascist leanings" and to assure the adoption of a "Pro-American program."¹⁶⁶ Over the next three months, A-70 submitted seven detailed reports to Van Deman listing dozens of Italian Americans of dubious loyalty, including Professor Paolo Valenti of Washington University in Saint Louis, who taught "the grandeur of Fascism"; Mrs. Prisca Marino, president of the Circolo Recreativo Italiano in San Diego, who was a "most ardent exponent of the Fascist ideal"; and Nino Calabro, the Italian consular attaché in Pittsburgh, who possibly held "a confidential position in the Italian secret police."¹⁶⁷

When the outbreak of war threatened Italian Americans with restrictive curfews and forced removal from their homes, Agent A-70 submitted moving testimonials of community loyalty in lieu of finger-pointing lists. Only weeks after Pearl Harbor, he sent a secret report, stamped with an authoritative "Confidential," with the information that San Diego's Italian American fishermen had "purchased between fifty and sixty thousand dollars worth of [U.S.] Defense Bonds."¹⁶⁸ As wartime security tightened in September 1942, A-70 sent Van Deman another confidential report objecting to the forced removal of Mrs. Julia Besozzi, his "look out" inside the Italian consulate in San Francisco since 1937. He reminded the general that Besozzi had proven herself "thoroughly reliable and loyal," reporting on the consulate's efforts to collect funds for "propaganda purposes" through the Sons of Italy and fingering fascist spies. Forced separation "from her home and family" would, the agent said, be "a great miscarriage of justice." Just two days later Van Deman wrote his contact at G-2 San Diego opposing her relocation since the intelligence she had passed "through Dr. Gigliotti has made possible the unearthing of several subversive Italian agents in this country."¹⁶⁹

When Washington's concerns about Italian American loyalties eased in late 1942, Agent A-70 wrote both the FBI and the general to say that after searching ceaselessly "for anything" suspicious in San Diego he could only report the "splendid spirit that prevails throughout the entire community." With the nation's

internal security now assured, Agent A-70 resigned as an FBI informant effective December 1 and shifted his efforts to foreign espionage. In this new role Dr. Gigliotti sent Van Deman a strategic analysis for a future Allied invasion of southern Italy keyed to detailed maps that he had “placed at the disposal of the Office of Strategic Services,” the government’s new overseas intelligence agency.¹⁷⁰ As an extraordinarily skilled operative, A-70 stayed the hand of state security by naming dozens of Italian Americans as spies while also assuring the apparatus of his community’s loyalty, a success that stands in striking contrast to the performance of a Japanese American agent known as B-31.

The U.S. Army’s Western Division, G-2 included, became deeply concerned in December 1941 about the security threat posed by Japanese Americans from their proximity to Los Angeles defense factories, their possible collaboration with Tokyo’s espionage in California and northern Mexico, and their supposedly divided loyalties. In this critical period, Van Deman’s role seems contradictory. He sent an endless stream of raw reports portraying Japanese Americans as a serious security risk, yet he advised the president against using extreme measures to contain that same threat.

As war approached the general’s network circulated warnings about Japanese spies. In June 1940, for example, Agent A-42 reported that Japanese homes in San Diego “exhibit an unusual number of high aerials,” indicating the possible possession of “short wave receiving sets.” In the immediate aftermath of the December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, Van Deman’s network generated a torrent of intelligence that seemed to show active Japanese imperial espionage with agents and radio transmitters embedded inside the Japanese American community.¹⁷¹

Among the many reports about the Japanese threat, none was as inflammatory as those the general received from Agent B-31 of Los Angeles. Ironically, this agent was a respected Japanese American writer, Mary Oyama, who was well placed for espionage inside her community as a founder of the League of Nisei Artists and Writers. Under her pen name “Dear Deirdre,” she was also a well-known advice and “gossip” columnist for Japanese newspapers in Los Angeles and San Francisco. In her first report for the general just thirteen days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, she cited “rumors . . . of some strange doings” to finger the Satsuma Nursery and Florist in Glendale, owned by Paul S. Mayemura. The business was really a “German-Japanese Post Office . . . receiving packets of mail . . . with the names of German agents on them.” Then these letters were, she claimed, altered with the correct address for forwarding to enemy spies “without suspicion.” Raising the specter of thousands of disloyal Japanese Americans, Agent B-31 also reported that an association on Sutter Street, San Francisco, was issuing lavishly lithographed certificates for the Japanese Military Servicemen’s League (*Zaibei Heimusha Kai*), an organization of U.S. residents still committed to serving in the emperor’s army. In her next “Confidential Report” of January 1942, she was even more ominous, warning that a hotel at 312 Ord Street in Los Angeles — “connected

with Japanese gambling interests in . . . Los Angeles”—had a basement that was visited by suspicious Japanese at night and was thus a secret safe house “used by various agents to make reports and get orders for the next assignment.” This last report was so serious that Van Deman forwarded two copies to the FBI.¹⁷²

In a cruel twist of fate, her reports stopped abruptly when Mary Oyama, no longer Agent B-31 but just another Nisei, was forcibly relocated to a Japanese American internment camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming, before being allowed to resettle in Denver. There she later wrote for the popular press, criticizing Caucasian “misconceptions concerning the Japanese in this country,” misconceptions that she had helped foster with her fanciful fabrications as Agent B-31.¹⁷³ In contrast to Van Deman’s later efforts to spare his Italian American operative from forced relocation, there is no evidence that he tried to save B-31 from being swept up in these mass arrests.

Van Deman himself repeatedly wrote the region’s internal security offices—FBI, G-2, and ONI—about the threat from Japanese agents just across the border in Baja California, Mexico.¹⁷⁴ Yet as a professional analyst he also noted signs of a deeper Japanese American loyalty, as in October 1940 when he sent G-2 Washington reports about a community meeting in the Imperial Valley to “affirm allegiance to the U.S. Constitution.”¹⁷⁵ In mid-February 1942 Van Deman became concerned over press reports about a congressional delegation on the West Coast that intended “to recommend the removal of all persons—citizens and aliens alike—from certain areas designated as ‘strategic.’” Indignant at the proposed relocation of Japanese Americans, he wrote an impassioned “Memorandum for the President” and sent it, via wartime intelligence chief William Donovan, directly to Franklin Roosevelt, damning this idea as “the craziest proposition I have heard of yet.” Besides ignoring “the fact that all three of the investigative agencies designated by the President have been intensively investigating people on this coast for over a year,” the plan made “no provision for the gathering of information concerning the loyalty of all of these removed people.” Nor did it comprehend the havoc mass removal would wreak “with the manufacture of airplanes and other similar defense material.” In sum, the general said, “this is an entirely unbaked and illy considered proposition . . . morally certain to throw into the arms of the Axis powers numbers of the second generation Japanese.”¹⁷⁶ Yet the dichotomy that Van Deman presented to the president between responsible security agencies and rabble-rousing politicians was false. As he should have known from documents dropped at his home, both G-2 and ONI were drawing data from the intelligence flow to conclude, like this congressional delegation, that forced removal was the sole solution to the perceived Japanese American threat.¹⁷⁷

The army’s G-2 was reporting that Japanese Americans were a serious security risk that defied conventional in situ surveillance. On January 6, 1942, the army’s Counter Intelligence Branch in Washington completed a staff study on “Japanese Population Areas in the Southern California Sector,” finding that there

were thirty-seven thousand Japanese around Los Angeles living “in close proximity to vital defense industries, communications, and military installations where constant surveillance of their activities is difficult,” even “impossible under present circumstances.” From MID headquarters in the War Department, this grave warning was disseminated down the intelligence chain of command to the Army’s IX Corps, which covered the entire West, thence to the Southern California Sector’s G-2, and finally to the San Diego Subsector’s S-2.¹⁷⁸

Framed by MID’s racial paradigm for the perception of threat, the jump from such alarmist intelligence, some of it generated by Van Deman’s own network, to extreme action was a short one. On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, allowing military commanders to designate “exclusion zones.” On March 2, the army’s IX Corps commander, Gen. John L. DeWitt, issued Public Proclamation No. 1 ordering all persons of Japanese descent excluded from the Pacific coast. Starting on March 27, the army moved with particular severity against the Los Angeles Japanese, sweeping twenty thousand at bayonet point into horse stalls and makeshift barracks at the Santa Anita Racetrack, among them citizen-spy Mary Oyama, the erstwhile Agent B-31.¹⁷⁹ Although Van Deman had counseled against internment, the intelligence he was disseminating conveyed an impression of Japanese American espionage so omnipresent as to require nothing less than the wholesale confinement of an entire ethnic group. Even as the army was preparing to round up Japanese Americans, Van Deman’s network continued to generate intelligence underscoring this threat.¹⁸⁰

Under the pressures of war, the general’s West Coast net also expanded to full national coverage. Starting in December 1941, for example, a new agent sent a series of reports, first on the German American Centrale of Youngstown, Ohio, whose seven listed leaders were “known Nazis” and an “outfit of sex perverts,” next on several instances of alleged “Negro sabotage financed by German groups” along the East Coast, and finally on the Negro Victory Rally at Harlem’s Golden Gate Ballroom, described as a “scheme to get the Negro race closer to the Communists.” Van Deman forwarded all this information to his usual security correspondents: the FBI, MID, ONI, the Eleventh Naval District, and the Better America Federation.¹⁸¹

By mid-1942, with putative ethnic threats contained and his wartime counter-intelligence work largely done, Van Deman, now in his eighties and helped by two assistants, returned to his core work on California’s communists, refining the index card system central to his method.¹⁸² A series of cards typed in July 1942 shows a wide-ranging search for communist influence among California’s intellectuals, including Victor Tasche, “Secretary-Treasurer of the American Newspaper Guild in 1940 . . . Communistic”; Dr. Paul S. Taylor, “professor of Economics at UC . . . presented economic surveys before La Follette Committee in 1939”; and Prof. Lewis Terman, Stanford University, “called on Atty. Gen. Robert Jackson to investigate violations of Constitution by Dies [HUAC] Committee.” At the

bottom of each card was an annotation listing sources that, in the case of Professor Terman, the famed creator of intelligence quotient (IQ) testing, read “DIO (2); MIS [Military Intelligence Service] (2); FBI/LA (1); File (1).”¹⁸³

The extant cards from the Van Deman archive reveal an intensified interest in the Communist Party's infiltration of Hollywood, an effort that showed his system at its most nimble and toxic. A July 1942 card on the wartime “Hollywood Writers Mobilization” summarized its activities as “a series of forums . . . with Erskine Caldwell Communist writer recently returned from Russia” organized by a committee that included “Darr Smith (CP suspect),” the latter a Los Angeles film critic later blacklisted.¹⁸⁴ The archive's index cast its net wide, catching even aspiring writers like Daniel Lewis James, also later blacklisted, who was carded as “a screen writer . . . writing a musical comedy which he hopes to produce in New York City,” and married to Mrs. Lilith James, “Organizer, Branch H, Northwest Section, Los Angeles Country Communist Party.”¹⁸⁵ In pursuit of every possible Hollywood communist, the general compiled cards on a motion picture publicist, a freelance musician, a Fox Studios electrical operator, and the character actor Alvin Hammer, describing him as holding “CPA Membership Card #46956.”¹⁸⁶ Within just a few years, Van Deman's careful compilation of this intelligence would bear fruit in the California legislature's attack on communism in Hollywood whose significance has long been overshadowed by Washington's heavily publicized HUAC hearings.

Hollywood Blacklist

In the aftermath of World War II, the nation's public-private security apparatus again expanded to create the anticommunist movement later identified with Senator Joseph McCarthy. According to a standard history of this period, the “network that helped shape the anticommunist crusade” included “labor leaders, journalists, priests, bureaucrats, ex-Communists, and ordinary private citizens.” Significantly, this new coalition, far broader and more sophisticated than its predecessor in 1919, drew its strength from an informal alliance between the FBI and civic groups such as the American Legion, the Catholic Church, and a network of some seventy-five civilian “experts” in communist subversion. In this context, Van Deman's intelligence files, which had long focused on Hollywood, emerged as a valuable cache of information for the movie industry exposés that became “a major turning point in the consolidation of the machinery of McCarthyism,” sparking a nationwide purge of suspected subversives in all walks of American life.¹⁸⁷

In this contentious postwar period, Van Deman worked closely with Richard E. Combs, a Visalia attorney and the long-serving chief counsel to the California Committee on Un-American Activities whose investigations of Hollywood played a central, unappreciated role in the national anticommunist movement.¹⁸⁸ Both

before and during the war, Washington's House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) remained focused on New York, the traditional center of American radicalism. The committee's early investigations of Hollywood in 1938–39 had proven inept, and its coverage of both California and the film industry in its 1944 master index of communist front groups was sparse, an oversight that the state legislature tried to correct. During its most militant years, 1941 to 1949, Sacramento's Committee on Un-American Activities was chaired by state senator Jack B. Tenney, a Los Angeles musician and songwriter ("Mexicali Rose") who had entered the assembly in 1936 along with his left-wing Democratic ally Sam Yorty. Just three years later, however, Tenney turned hard right, embittered at being mocked as a "red-baiter" and "rotund" when the communists ousted him from his well-paid presidency of Local 47 of the American Federation of Musicians. During the war Tenney's committee, using Walt Disney's angry denunciations of "Communistic agitation" in his studio as its springboard, conducted four aggressive hearings into Hollywood radicalism.¹⁸⁹ With Moscow and Washington allied against Hitler during the war, Tenney's charges of communist influence in the film colony, on the UCLA campus, and in his old musicians' union aroused little public interest. By war's end Hollywood's leftists had dismissed the senator as a buffoon: flabby, drunken, inarticulate, shamelessly self-aggrandizing, and aggressively anti-Semitic.¹⁹⁰

After the war, however, the political climate grew conservative and Republicans made major gains in the 1946 elections, creating ideal conditions for Senator Tenney's doggedly persistent investigations. In these theatrical hearings the senator played the anticommunist attack-dog, bullying witnesses and twisting facts to make baseless accusations. His chief counsel, Richard Combs, was the respected expert on communism who used archival data for both poignant questions and quick compilation of the committee's fourteen thousand data cards on suspected traitors. "It was the duty of Dick Combs," Tenney later recalled, "to conduct and supervise all investigations." Describing his chief counsel as a "good trial lawyer" with a "smooth, clever method of examination and . . . [a] suave manner," Tenney delegated the details to Combs, handed him stacks of fifty or sixty blank signed subpoenas, and sat back as he "produced witnesses who could and did testify to things that amazed the members of the committee."¹⁹¹ A less sympathetic source, a former ACLU leader, described Combs as a "legendary" figure "venerated in political intelligence . . . circles" who during his twenty years with the committee "orchestrated a network of informers . . . , investigators, and contacts cloaked in secrecy."¹⁹² In effect the senator's wholesale delegation of his subpoena powers to his counsel, and Combs's reliance on Van Deman for advice about their use, invested the old general with surrogate state power. Simultaneously, Van Deman's contact with Combs served as a conduit that allowed the U.S. intelligence community to leak damning but unconfirmed information about suspected subversives from classified files into the committee's public hearings.

In retrospect, there seems to have been a seamless interleaving of Van Deman's files and the data that Combs deployed in his role as chief inquisitor in committee hearings. Writing the general in May 1947, for example, Combs reported that a black bag operation had secured "a list of the State Communist Party functionaries" from "one of the Alameda Country comrades (without his knowledge or consent, of course.)" After checking the list of fifteen officials and twenty-one front organizations against his indexed card file, Van Deman forwarded the document to the region's internal security agencies—Military Intelligence Los Angeles, FBI San Diego, the Eleventh Naval District, the Sixth U.S. Army Presidio, and the California National Guard—advising them that "since this list was obtained in an extremely confidential manner, it should be handled with care."¹⁹³ A year later, when Combs won an additional appointment as chief counsel for the joint California-Washington Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities, he assured Van Deman that he would find time amid the crush of administrative work to assure delivery of the "Washington Committee's Reports" to the general's growing archive.¹⁹⁴

Consequently, there was often a close correspondence between Van Deman's private files and the committee's published hearings. In its *Third Report* for 1947, for example, the California Committee on Un-American Activities charged that "Communist steering committees" had launched "a two-pronged agitational drive" by forming a front group called the Progressive Citizens of America. In summarizing this group's inaugural meeting at the Embassy Auditorium in downtown Los Angeles on February 11, 1947, the committee report stated that "nearly all the organizers of the Progressive Citizens . . . have been affiliated with Communist Party activities," including Lena Horne, Gene Kelly, Thomas Mann, Frederic March, Dr. Linus Pauling, Paul Robeson, Gregory Peck, and Edward G. Robinson.¹⁹⁵ On February 13, just two days after the event, Van Deman had received a strikingly similar typed report, still raw with personal invective, from Agent B-51, his undercover Hollywood operative. The agent described the same packed meeting, whose speakers included the song-and-dance star Gene Kelly and famed chemist Linus Pauling. As he exited this gathering of what he called the Los Angeles "swimming pool intelligentsia" and took a leaflet from a "one world" group headed by ex-congressman Jerry Voorhis, the operative fumed, closing his report to the general with a call for an "organized movement started in the press or in public hearings to expose this group . . . to the people of California."¹⁹⁶

Such a movement had already started as a Sacramento-Washington pincer attack on movieland communism. Even before the end of the war Senator Tenney had announced, in July 1945, that he would assist the forthcoming Hollywood hearings before HUAC in Washington by sharing "the great volumes of information from our investigations which have shown widespread Marxism in the film colony." Indeed, the California committee had held two hearings on Hollywood in 1946, which focused on its *bête noir*, the Screen Writers Guild, and accused the

group, in its *Third Report* of March 1947, of advocating a “plan for ‘thought control’” initiated by “Comrade” Dalton Trumbo, a prominent screenwriter. With its aggressive probing of communist influence, the *Third Report* also served as the first Hollywood blacklist. For example, the veteran actress Anne Revere, though recently awarded an Oscar for her role in the film *National Velvet*, stopped getting calls after this report listed her as a stockholder in a “pro-Soviet, red-slanted” Los Angeles radio station and a director of the Progressive Citizens of America, which the report branded as “a new and broader Communist front for the entire United States.” After months of correspondence and collaboration, Senator Tenney himself testified before HUAC in March 1947, submitting 372 pages of data to prepare the groundwork for Washington’s highly publicized Hollywood hearings six months later. Insisting that there is “a time when tolerance becomes treason,” Tenney warned that American communists were “the greatest fifth column, the greatest group of traitors, assassins, terrorists, that the world has ever seen, and America will collapse like an eggshell unless we start . . . exposing them.” In a hint of things to come, Tenney used his testimony to include Frank Sinatra “in a class with John Garfield and Charlie Chaplin as movie colony figures giving aid and comfort to the communists.”¹⁹⁷

In these same March 1947 hearings, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover fired a sensational first shot in this war on silver-screen subversion. Armed with intelligence that some eighty American communists were in fact Soviet spies, Hoover was determined to succeed where he had failed back in 1919 by smashing the party. “The American Communists launched a furtive attack on Hollywood in 1935,” Hoover told HUAC, “by the issuance of a directive calling for a concentration in Hollywood.” After the director explained the many methods of communist infiltration, Representative Richard Nixon—a freshman California congressman elected by red-baiting the liberal incumbent, Jerry Voorhis—asked if there was “any one area in which the Communists are more . . . more deeply entrenched than any other.” Above all, Hoover replied, Congress should concern itself with “those fields which mold public opinion and in which the Communists have been successful in effecting infiltration, such as the radio, the motion pictures.”¹⁹⁸ This seemingly scripted dialogue indicates two defining attributes of the anticommunist movement: first, a well-publicized attack on subversive influence in Hollywood that sparked public outrage, even hysteria, over alien manipulation of an iconic American institution; and, second, an emerging political alliance between federal security agencies and California’s anticommunists. From San Diego General Van Deman hailed Hoover’s attack on the “Red menace,” asserting that his testimony “has aroused the citizens of this country as no other one speech on any subject has done in my remembrance.” As the FBI’s anticommunist campaign intensified, the general advised Hoover that “we are really in the beginning of the third world war” whose object was nothing less than “the determined attempt of the Soviet Union to take over the United States.”¹⁹⁹

Reflecting Hollywood's new role as the nation's political battleground, California's anti-red apparatus redoubled its surveillance. The film colony's leaders fought back, producing a historic confrontation. In May 1947 Van Deman's Agent B-51 reported on a Hollywood rally for a liberal third-party presidential aspirant, Henry Wallace, sponsored by the Progressive Citizens of America, which filled Gilmore Stadium with a crowd of twenty-five thousand. As he seated himself in the bleachers among "the riff-raff from the cesspools of Europe and scum of the Seven Seas," this tough sleuth B-51 listened unimpressed while Linus Pauling, a future Nobel Prize winner, "rambled along for a while on a speech . . . written for him by some left-winger." Then came leading lady Katherine Hepburn, who swept across the stage, resplendent in a red gown, to rip the un-American committees in Congress and the California legislature as nothing other than un-American. She spoke with such grace that even this witch-hunting operative was star-struck, admitting that her speech was "really a master piece." After hearing the thundering applause for Henry Wallace, B-51 concluded that "the left-wing groups are again on the march." In a personal letter to the general, he expressed the fear "that we are entering a very serious period in our history" for in Los Angeles "the Communists and 'fellow travelers' . . . are more outspoken and more vicious."²⁰⁰ Indeed, trumpeting this massive turnout, the group reprinted Hepburn's speech as a pamphlet with her defiant words on the cover: "I speak because I am an American and as an American I shall always resist any attempt at the abridgement of freedom."²⁰¹

Six months after J. Edgar Hoover's warning about movieland communism, HUAC reconvened in October 1947 to force actors, directors, and writers to supply the names of Hollywood's hidden communists under oath. When ten screenwriters, the legendary "Hollywood Ten" led by Dalton Trumbo and Ring Lardner Jr., refused to answer questions about their membership in the Screen Writers' Guild, Congress indicted them. The studios, acting as the Motion Picture Association, formally banned them from the industry, launching the first full Hollywood blacklist. In the decade following these hearings, the public-private security nexus reached the apex of its influence, with the FBI monitoring suspected subversives and voluntary organizations such as Van Deman's network denouncing them. In 1947 as well, a group of former internal security operatives—a retired army intelligence major and three former FBI agents—launched the influential newsletter *Counter Attack*, which drew on official and unofficial sources to name names and to advise subscribers: "Whenever you hear a party-liner on radio . . . protest to station, network, producer & sponsor." These accusations often generated threats of movie or media boycotts by the American Legion and allied anti-communist groups, compelling the studios to self-censor.²⁰²

Beyond the high drama in Washington, Van Deman's network continued to attack the Communist Party on the West Coast, paying particular attention to the film industry. As denunciations intensified following the blacklisting of the

Hollywood Ten, Van Deman advised counsel Combs about every detail of the California committee's upcoming hearings into communist front groups. Above all he used his encyclopedic knowledge of the party to guarantee that the committee's subpoenas could be served, an effort now complicated, he said, by the disappearance of San Diego's "reds," who had gone deep "underground as far as they can dig."²⁰³ More broadly, Van Deman's archive served as a source for informal, possibly illegal security checks for state and local employment, vetting, for example, all applicants for teaching posts in the San Diego schools.²⁰⁴

In June 1949 the California Un-American Activities Committee moved beyond its colorless probe of communist organizations by issuing a 709-page report that condemned hundreds of liberal luminaries and Hollywood stars as "red appeasers," including, Pearl S. Buck, Charlie Chaplin, Maurice Chevalier, Helen Gahagan Douglas, Lena Horne, John Garfield, Dashiell Hammet, Lillian Hellman, Katherine Hepburn, Danny Kaye, Ring Lardner Jr., Dorothy Parker, Gregory Peck, Edward G. Robinson, Artie Shaw, Orson Welles, and even Frank Sinatra. To warn the "people of California" about a "Fifth Column of thousands of potential traitors" loyal to the "murderously aggressive . . . force of World Communism," Senator Tenney's *Fifth Report* contained forty-eight pages of carefully cross-referenced lists publicly identifying 4,307 individuals as affiliates of communist front groups. Setting a new, ultimately unsurpassed standard for anticommunist denunciations, Tenney's list was so long, so detailed, so far beyond anything *Counter Attack* or HUAC had released to date that it seemed to bear the mark of the voluminous data in Van Deman's secret archive.²⁰⁵

At the national level, FBI Director Hoover pressed for prosecution of the Communist Party under the Smith Act—producing a spectacular New York show trial that convicted eleven leaders in late 1949, crippled the party as a political force, and inspired further indictments of its second-tier leadership. Then in June 1950, *Counter Attack* published a sensational pamphlet, *Red Channels*, drawing primarily on reports by HUAC and the California committee to list 151 entertainment professionals affiliated with subversive front groups. Beyond merely naming names, the pamphlet claimed the party had dominated Hollywood since 1938 through a powerful propaganda machine that boosted its sympathizers "from humble beginnings in Communist-dominated night clubs . . . to stardom."²⁰⁶ That November at the Globe Theater in downtown Los Angeles, the general's Hollywood operative, B-51, monitored a meeting of the Arts, Sciences and Professions Council, observing a speech by film noir actor Dick Powell, who attacked "the great damage the book 'Red Channels' was doing to the movie . . . and television industry." The actor criticized the three former FBI men who were using the *Counter Attack* newsletter to "operate a blacklist" that had ruined great actors such as Frederick March.²⁰⁷ At the council's next meeting, Agent B-51 amplified his monitoring with the assistance of "two different agents" and appended a complete list of the group's forty-two directors, including former California

attorney general Robert Kenny and longtime surveillance subject Ben Margo-lis.²⁰⁸ Indicating the Arts Council's status as a top target for the right, just two months later Van Deman received another report from his counterintelligence contact at the California National Guard, Lt. Col. Frank Forward, with a copy of the ballot for the council's board of directors.²⁰⁹

The Arts Council's next meeting, in April 1951, came in the midst of HUAC's second and most successful round of Hollywood investigations, lending a poignant tone to these proceedings. With fifteen hundred people filling the Embassy Auditorium in downtown Los Angeles, the gathering began in darkness as an announcer read the names of twenty-five organizations blacklisted by state and federal agencies. When the lights went up, actress Gale Sondergaard strode across the stage to castigate "Larry Parks for being a stool pigeon," a reference to this actor's performance before HUAC weeping and pleading to be spared the agony of betraying his Hollywood friends. Assessing this meeting for Van Deman's network, Agent B-2 dismissed the large crowd as "typical Boyle Heights and Hollywood Jewish reds." Although the council was much diminished and now had only "the 2nd and 3rd string with a few stars scattered in among them," it must be stopped, Agent B-2 urged, "just as the others were stopped by publication of their names and their records."²¹⁰

For the next four weeks the Los Angeles press was filled almost daily with reports of actors, directors, and writers appearing before HUAC in Washington. Some, like the writer Richard J. Collins, denounced their colleagues as communists. Some, like the gossip columnist Hedda Hopper, rattled off names. Others, like screen actor John Garfield, insisted "I am no Pink. I am no fellow traveler." A dwindling few, like the actor Alvin Hammer, a subject of Van Deman's card system, refused to name names. But all of them, either by official sanction or private censure, were damaged and sometimes destroyed. By 1957 the Communist Party was broken as a political force, reduced from a dynamic movement with seventy-five thousand members in 1947 to an "inbred, isolated sect" of only three thousand a decade later.²¹¹

Yet even at the peak of its power in the early 1950s, this anticommunist coalition, consumed by its own accusatory frenzy, self-destructed. In Washington HUAC suffered a heavy blow when the chairman of its Hollywood hearings, Rep. J. Parnell Thomas, was forced to resign from Congress in 1950 to enter federal prison on a corruption conviction. Four years later Sen. Joseph McCarthy's overblown accusations against the U.S. Army led to his censure by the Senate. One of the ex-communists who had given such convincing testimony before HUAC and the Smith Act trials, Harvey Matusow, published a book, *False Witness*, admitting that many of his accusations were knowing lies. Then, in 1957, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Smith Act convictions of second-tier communist leaders, blocking further prosecutions and restraining the zeal of FBI director Hoover.²¹²

In California the anticommunist implosion was even more dramatic. In releasing his committee's fifth report in 1949, blacklisting some four thousand alleged subversives, Senator Tenney had overplayed his hand. First, he stuffed legislators' mailboxes with an inflammatory issue of the newsletter *Alert* by the anti-communist zealot Edward Gibbons, denouncing communist sympathies among a dozen state legislators and leading officials, notably District Attorney Edmund "Pat" Brown. Tenney then hired this same fanatic to write much of the accusatory fifth report, prompting a longtime ally Sam Yorty to engineer his ouster as chair of the California Committee on Un-American Activities. These reverses and a later defeat in the Republican primary for Congress in 1952 crystallized Tenney's growing sense that "organized Jewry was now openly hostile to me." After an intensive study led him to conclude that "loyalty to one's . . . country . . . could not exist in the Jewish mind," Tenney was drawn into a deeply spiritual alliance with America's leading anti-Semite, the Rev. Gerald L. K. Smith. In 1945–46 the reverend's stormy arrival in Los Angeles at the head of his Christian Nationalist Crusade had won him a rabid following among the county's conservatives and, ironically, condemnation by Tenney's committee as a "rabble-inciting crusader . . . stirring up hatred and antagonism toward the Jewish citizens of America." But seven years later in 1952, a warm meeting at Tenney's Hollywood home revealed Reverend Smith as a "virile and vigorous" visionary who wisely "opposed the mongrelization of blacks and whites." Proudly, Tenney accepted the vice presidential nomination of the reverend's Christian Nationalist Party at its Los Angeles convention. The ticket, headed by a sphinx-like Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who neither accepted nor rejected the nomination, won just eighteen hundred votes nationwide out of the sixty million cast for president in 1952. Two years later he launched a reelection campaign for state senate under the slogan "The Jews Won't Take Jack Tenney." But he suffered a career-ending defeat in the Republican primary to Mrs. Mildred Younger, a former fashion model best known as the GOP "glamour girl."²¹³

With their crusade against "organized Jewry" routed in Los Angeles, these anti-Semitic activists were slowly pushed off the national stage. Jack Tenney traded his comfortable Hollywood home for life as a city attorney in Cabazon, California, a dusty high-desert town with a few hundred residents huddled around a seedy poker palace. Gerald Smith moved headquarters from his lavish Victorian home in Glendale, Los Angeles, to Eureka Springs, Arkansas, a faded resort town of fourteen hundred. There he opened a Christian theme park beneath a concrete statue he commissioned, "The Christ of the Ozarks," striking for both its soaring height of sixty-seven feet and its stunted composition. In 1968 Smith began drawing audiences of three or four thousand nightly to his Grand Passion Play, a spectacle with two hundred actors on a four-hundred-foot stage, which he proclaimed "the only presentation of this kind in the world that has not

diluted its content to flatter the Christ-hating Jews." Forty years later it remains the largest pageant in America, playing to packed audiences nightly.²¹⁴

Even after the mass anticommunist movement imploded in the mid-1950s, federal antisubversion efforts persisted for another twenty years. Reflecting the resilience of the state-civilian security alliance, the FBI and military intelligence institutionalized the movement's intensity and illegal methods. From 1955 to 1978, the FBI conducted 930,000 surveillance cases, indicating a vigilant internal security. In this same period, the bureau operated its Counterintelligence Program, which transformed many of the extralegal methods first used ad hoc against the Communist Party into a covert doctrine. According to the bureau's official history, it "responded to the threat of subversion with Counterintelligence Programs (COINTELPRO) first against the Communist Party (1956), later against other violent/subversive groups like the Black Panthers and the Ku Klux Klan (1960's) . . . at times, effectively stepping out of its proper role as a law enforcement agency."²¹⁵ More bluntly, an assistant to the FBI director, William C. Sullivan, called this operation "a rough, tough, dirty business. . . . No holds were barred." In assessing the 2,370 counterintelligence actions taken under this program during its fifteen-year history, the U.S. Senate's Church Committee called them a "sophisticated vigilante operation" involving techniques that "would be intolerable in a democratic society even if all of the targets had been involved in violent activity."²¹⁶

After the Communist Party dwindled to insignificance by the late 1950s, COINTELPRO focused, during the 1960s, on a succession of putative security threats: the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan, the black civil rights movement, and the antiwar New Left. In its civil rights operations the bureau aimed at preventing the rise of a "messiah" who could "unify and electrify" the movement, specifically targeting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Stokely Carmichael, and Elijah Muhammad for disinformation campaigns to discredit them among the "responsible" white and black communities. In its attack on the New Left, the bureau attempted to "expose, disrupt, and otherwise neutralize" the movement's leaders, using a range of extralegal tactics to explore "every avenue of possible embarrassment"—an effort supported by parallel army and CIA programs to investigate, infiltrate, and discredit the Vietnam antiwar movement.²¹⁷ In each successive step from the Klan to the civil rights movement and the New Left, a Senate investigation reported, "the use of dangerous, degrading, or blatantly unconstitutional techniques" seemed to have become "less restrained with each subsequent program."²¹⁸

In its effort to destroy the antiwar and civil rights movements, the bureau's methods, according to a later Senate report, included "secret surveillance of citizens . . . through secret informants, . . . wiretaps, microphone 'bugs,' surreptitious mail opening, and break-ins." Field agents also engaged in operations using "unsavory and vicious tactics . . . including anonymous attempts to break up marriages,

disrupt meetings, ostracize persons from their professions, and provoke target groups into rivalries that might result in deaths.” In fact this reliance on questionable methods became the dominant feature of FBI internal security operations. From 1960 to 1974 it conducted over half a million separate investigations of “subversive” suspects, yet a Senate committee noted that “not a single individual or group has been prosecuted since 1957 under laws which prohibit planning or advocating action to overthrow the government.” By contrast the FBI succeeded in discrediting civil rights leaders “by disseminating derogatory information to the press” and demoralizing New Left leaders by circulating disinformation within their ranks. In sum, the Senate concluded, these FBI operations ran “grave risks of undermining the democratic process.”²¹⁹ Though the Church committee traced these abuses to domestic roots, this counterintelligence effort seems, in its reliance on penetration and disinformation instead of legal prosecution, strikingly similar to tactics the constabulary had used against Filipino nationalists after 1901 and techniques Van Deman introduced into U.S. Military Intelligence in 1917.

The Ever-Lasting Archive

On January 22, 1952, General Van Deman, then eighty-six, died quietly at his home in San Diego. The house was filled with the confidential reports he had so carefully collected, carded, and filed for the past quarter century. In its obituary, the *San Diego Union* wrote that “his knowledge of Red activities in the subversive line probably was not exceeded by any other American,” implying that this information had been extinguished along with its creator. That was not to be.²²⁰

Seven years earlier when Van Deman’s health had begun to fail, the army and FBI engaged in extended negotiations over the disposition of his files. As the lead counterespionage agency, the bureau was the logical repository. But at least three careful FBI surveys found that his eighty-five thousand oversized cards did not fit into their standard files and recommended letting the army take control. “I think it is something we should now stay out of,” J. Edgar Hoover wrote in the margin of one such memo in late 1945. “What the Army does should be *immaterial* to us.” Yet the deep affection the FBI director and his men felt for this titan of counterintelligence blocked implementation of their decision. For nearly a decade, field agents had called on the general almost weekly building a relationship that was “very cordial, friendly, and intimate.” As Van Deman’s health faded through flu, enlarged prostate, and a serious fracture, Hoover himself sent warm notes expressing “my sincere wish for your speedy recuperation.” Concerned that his files must “fall into the right hands,” Van Deman hinted obliquely to Hoover in October 1951 that he wanted the bureau to take possession. Within hours, San Diego’s senior agent was at the Van Demans’ door, reporting that the old general “feels very strongly about his work, which he sincerely loves,” and any suggestion of disinterest in the archive “would most certainly leave him heart-broken, disillusioned,

and possibly hasten his death.” The FBI man suggested to the general’s senior aide, Colonel Forney, now retired, that he might continue the work, but the latter replied that he did not “have sufficient prestige among Army authorities in Washington.”²²¹

Ultimately, however, security trumped sentiment and the FBI gradually gave way. By March 1951, the army’s Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) had developed detailed plans to protect the archive, approved at the highest level by Maj. Gen. Alexander R. Bolling, chief of military intelligence. Thus, only sixty-one minutes after Van Deman died at 8:35 a.m. on January 22, 1952, an FBI teletype transmitted the news to Hoover in Washington, and General Bolling soon called to assure him the files were being secured. As the general spoke, the 115th CIC detachment moved into Van Deman’s house to spend the next nine days sorting and packing. The secret archive, with classified documents and coded name cards for some 250,000 suspected subversives, was quietly split, with the bulk, estimated at ninety linear feet, taken by the army and used in federal security operations until 1968. The smaller share passed to the general’s aides at his San Diego archive.²²² Once known to only a few, these secret files would now be known to even fewer.

The American public first learned of Van Deman’s bequest to the nation a decade later in 1962 when a bitter partisan battle erupted in California over control of the smaller San Diego archive. In February the adjutant general of the California Highway Patrol, acting on orders from Gov. Edmund G. Brown’s Democratic administration, conducted a midnight raid and removed twelve filing cabinets from San Diego’s National Guard armory, where Van Deman’s papers had been housed since his death. The files were then trucked five hundred miles north to Sacramento and stored at the Highway Patrol headquarters. “We had information there had been leaks from the files,” the patrol’s adjutant general told the *Los Angeles Times*, adding, “It had been alleged that these files were being used by unauthorized persons for purposes not in the best interests of the state.” Later California government officials admitted that San Diego’s state senator, Democratic leader Hugo Fisher, had complained about the right wing’s use of this sensitive information. Outraged, the archive’s curator, retired National Guard general George Fisher (no relation to the senator), claimed that the files were private property. At Van Deman’s death in 1952, one of his close associates, Lt. Col. Frank Forward, had formed the San Diego Research Library as “an independent anti-Communist organization” and moved the files into the local National Guard armory. The records grew to fill twelve filing cabinets with information on some two hundred thousand individuals and had been used to screen employees, General Fisher claimed, by every state administration for the past ten years. Calling himself “an anti-Communist fighter,” Fisher growled, “It’s only Democrats who are worried about this.” In its rebuttal to this blast from the right, the state insisted that Forward, as chief of counterintelligence for the California National Guard reserve, had maintained the files in an official capacity that ended with

his retirement the previous December. Since the guard had now eliminated its “counter-intelligence capacity,” the Highway Patrol’s adjutant general had quite properly confiscated these official records. As the case became a cause célèbre among San Diego’s right wing, General Fisher filed a lawsuit demanding the return of all the files. In July the parties settled out of court and Sacramento trucked the files back to San Diego.²²³

The next chapter in this story came ten years later when the federal portion of Van Deman’s documents finally surfaced. In July 1971 the *New York Times* reported that the Pentagon had recently transferred the files to Sen. James O. Eastland for use by his Internal Security Subcommittee, the Senate’s counterpart to HUAC. When Sen. Sam Ervin, an outspoken civil libertarian, asked the Pentagon for an explanation, its general counsel, J. Fred Buzhardt, explained that the defense secretary had recently ordered that they “will not collect or store information on people not affiliated with the Department of Defense.” This transfer, the counsel said, seemed the best way to purge these personal records.²²⁴

Prior to shipping the files to the Senate, the army had investigated Van Deman’s archive, concluding that “the most striking feature of the files” was his ability to collect classified information from the army, navy, and FBI, producing a wealth of detailed intelligence that was nothing less than “remarkable.” On his death, the Sixth Army in San Francisco had kept his papers at the Presidio until 1968 when they were shipped to Fort Holabird, Maryland, home of the army’s Counter Intelligence Corps. There they were integrated into the U.S. Army Investigative Records for the next three years, until public controversy over government surveillance of anti-Vietnam protesters prompted their transfer to the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee in 1971. “They were examined,” said Senator Eastland, “and found pertinent and germane [*sic*] to the subcommittee’s purpose.” In evaluating Van Deman’s papers prior to the transfer, this anonymous assessor warned that “there may be some embarrassment to the Army because of the information contained on labor and civil rights movements.”²²⁵

But this story had even more secrets to tell. Intrigued by the controversy, a *New York Times* reporter, Richard Halloran, called the FBI to confirm a tip that Van Deman’s files “contained confidential reports” from both the bureau and military intelligence. The FBI issued a detailed denial, and Hoover himself remarked that the “N.Y. Times will characteristically distort the true facts.” Despite the denial, Halloran pressed on to investigate the hidden political history of this private archive, finding that it may have played a significant, subterranean role in postwar California politics. Documents revealed that the general had “provided information in the 1930s and 1940s” to both HUAC under Rep. Martin Dies Jr. and the California Committee on Un-American Activities under state senator Jack Tenney. Interviewed by the *Times*, California Democrats charged that Richard Nixon’s right-wing supporters had used sensitive information from the archive for the red-baiting that helped him unseat liberal U.S. representative Jerry

Voorhis in 1946 and defeat actress Helen Gahagan Douglas for the U.S. Senate in 1950. Indeed, Hugo Fisher, the former state senator for San Diego and now a Superior Court judge, recalled that “material from the files appeared in the so called ‘pink sheets’ distributed at rallies for Nixon and other Republicans in the 1950 campaign,” an allegation aides in the Nixon White House waved away as no longer “pertinent.” Other sources told the *Times* that “information from the Van Deman files went to the late senator Joseph R. McCarthy for his use against those he called Communists,” a charge the senator’s former aides could not confirm.²²⁶ Two weeks after this report appeared, a *Times* editorial branded Van Deman’s archive “politico-military poison.” Condemning his files as “political paranoia, assembled with the inexcusable complicity of official military and civilian intelligence agencies,” all of them should, the paper said, “be destroyed.”²²⁷ As their relevance diminished with time, the Senate transferred the general’s files to the U.S. National Archives, where researchers gained limited access to them in the 1980s and unrestricted use only recently, making the writing of this chapter possible.²²⁸

At the same time the last vestige of Van Deman’s legacy was being extinguished in Sacramento. After Senator Tenney’s ouster from the California Un-American Activities Committee in 1949, his conservative successor chaired hearings for another twenty years until its long-serving counsel, the general’s ally Richard Combs, retired in 1970. Only a year later the committee’s death was foretold when the state Senate’s president pro tem, James Mills, found that its twenty thousand card files contained dossiers on dozens of legislators, including himself. “I knew that if the committee saw fit to treat me as a possible subversive,” he explained, “they could do the same to anyone.” The California Senate dissolved the committee in March 1971 and sealed its records.²²⁹

But the general’s legacy was not limited to a few perishable files. It lay deep within the architecture of the U.S. internal security apparatus that he had helped create, from the details of its filing system to the larger design of an imperious surveillance over American society. Fifty years after Van Deman had made the APL a civilian auxiliary to his newly established Military Intelligence Division, the illiberal influence of this state-civil security alliance was now all too apparent.

Conclusion

As illustrated by this half-century history of U.S. surveillance, the pacification of the Philippines served as both blueprint and bellwether for Washington’s nascent national security state. In its search for security in the midst of revolution, the U.S. colonial regime at Manila drew untested technologies from the United States, perfected their practice, and then transmitted these refined repressive mechanisms back to the metropole, contributing to the formation of a federal internal security apparatus. Yet the expansion of this nexus in the years surrounding World War I also introduced a recurring tension between an eighteenth-century

constitution and a twentieth-century capacity for mass surveillance that has persisted to the present. As the American state incorporated advanced information systems through this imperial dialectic, it cultivated a repressive capability manifest in the periodic political crises so central to many major events in U.S. political history during the past century: the red scare, the anti-Japanese hysteria, the McCarthy era, the anti-Vietnam protests, and, as will be discussed in the final chapter, illegal electronic surveillance since September 2001.

More broadly, colonial rule had a profound influence on metropolitan society, introducing an imperial mentality of coercive governance into U.S. domestic politics. Inspired by an expansive sense of dominion over colonized peoples abroad, Americans would apply similarly coercive methods to the reformation of their own society, acculturating immigrants, barring aliens, rehabilitating addicts, imposing public health measures, and policing suspected subversives. In the realm of internal security, this illiberal legacy of empire so evident inside the United States would prove, as we will see in part two, even more enduring in the postcolonial Philippines.